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SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS

VOLUME XV

THE CHARLES MEN

BY

VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

PART II

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THE CHARLES MEN

BY

VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

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TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH
BY CHARLES WHARTON STORK
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FREDRIK BÖÖK

PART II

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THE CHARLES MEN

PART II

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THE CHARLES MEN

When the Bells Ring

IN southern Småland, just where the stony road to Scania branches into several village paths and a dusty slope leads up to the parish church, there stood a mill, painted red, and with the largest wings that any one had ever seen in all that region. The miller was dead long since. His widow, named Kerstin Bure, a woman who in her childhood had seen happier days and eaten from shining plates of pewter, managed the mill after her own fashion. She never made mention of her birth or of the love-dealings that had enticed her from a well-to-do pastor's home to the narrow tower-room of a miller, where the axle-beam groaned directly over her sleeping-place; but then she did not speak of other things either. The husband had been too poor to possess a cottage of his own, and had instead built a chimney straight through the roof of the mill. There, year after year, with her sewing in her hand, the wife had silently continued to watch the work of the men. If at any time she was asked for advice, she answered preferably with a nod or a shake of the head, and she seldom went away further than a stone's throw from the mill. In figure she was tall and slim with delicate hands, and her face under the starched cap, which was always of the same in-

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variable whiteness, reminded one of Mary Magdalen's on the picture at the altar, though it was more yellowed and shrunken. She never took women into her service, and so women in particular accustomed themselves to passing her in silence. They did not rightly know whether she was proud or meek, but most of them thought that she might well be both. When the sexton appeared with his spokesmen and in his best Sunday attire to solicit the hand of this woman, who was already old and gray, she became quite confused and abashed. She blushed to the roots of her hair, and merely shook her head.

One morning she found an infant boy on a heap of twigs by the spring, and as no one knew anything about the parents, she took the little one in with great tenderness.

"Nobody can tell whether there lies in that heart good or evil seed," she said, "but the day may come when I may find out. You shall be called Johannes, because you are to become devout as an angel of God. I have been sore afflicted, but for you I shall lay by a pretty penny, so that your life-days may sometime counterbalance the heavy ones I have known."

The boy grew up, and when he prepared for confirmation, he surprised everybody by his pious and godly answers. With his glossy flaxen hair hanging over his shoulders, he afterwards sat by his foster-

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mother on the mill steps in the bright midsummer evenings and read diligently in the books that he had borrowed from the pastor of the congregation. They sat always taciturnly and quietly, but sometimes he pointed out with his finger some line that seemed to him more beautiful than the others and read it aloud softly.

Hay-ricks and meadows were sending out their perfume of harvest and pasture, and so, too, though withered, did the clover- or trefoil-blossoms that lay forgotten here and there between the leaves of the books as markers. Even late at night only a single star burned, but that was large and radiant. Everywhere people were awake and talking, and the cottage doors stood open.

Many whispered to one another a dark rumor of how the Swedish army had been beaten at Poltava, and that now the Danes were to land and complete the entire overthrow of Sweden.

One Saturday night a rider stopped at the stairs of the mill and asked for lodging.

Johannes looked doubtfully at his foster-mother, and asked the stranger whether he would not rather go on up the hill to the provost's place.

"No," he answered, "I want first to see to-night how the people are getting on."

He managed to get his horse into the walled passage under the mill, and then settled down quite

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contentedly among the others to a plate of beer-soup and a loaf of black bread.

He had let his hair and his chin-whiskers grow, so that he looked like a common peasant, but sometimes he pulled his mouth toward his ears and talked harshly in the broadest Scanian, and sometimes he squeezed up his eyes and lamented in the most sentimental Smålandish. He kept awake all night, continuing his merry discourse. Once he took a piece of charcoal and drew a speaking likeness of Johannes on the wall. A little later he gave Kerstin Bure shrewd advice as to how she should grease the mill-axle. Or he would sing psalms and polka-tunes, to which he himself set the words. In the morning he took from his travelling-sack a suit with bright soldier's buttons. When Johannes and the old woman peeped wonderingly through the shutters to see whither he went, he was already standing in the church square, and there was such a clatter and hubbub among the populace that it echoed for miles.

"That's Mons Bock!" clamored the crowd. "That is our valiant General Stenbock. If we have him with us, we 'll go out and fight for our country, every one of us, father and son, so help us God!"

"Johannes," said Kerstin Bure to her sixteen-year-old foster-son, with a hardness in her voice that he had never heard before, "you are meant to keep devoutly to your books and some day wear

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a pastor's surplice as my sainted father did, but not to lose your blood in worldly feuds. Stick your tinder-box and clasp-knife in your jacket and tie your leather coat at your belt! Go then out into the woods and keep yourself well hid there until we have peace in the land! Before that I do not wish to see you again. Remember that! You hear now how the men shout in the church square, but mayhap their mouths will soon be stopped with black earth."

He did as she bade, and wandered off into the woods by unknown paths. The firs became gradually more bristling and dense, so that for a long distance he had to push through backwards with the leather coat over his face. In the evening he came to a wide fen, and far out at the rim of a black lake lay an island overgrown with alders.

"There I'll build my den," he thought. But the quagmire of the swampy fen which floated over the twofold bottom, and the dark water where not a glimmer of daylight broke through, sank beneath his feet, until, exhausted and half asleep, he sat down on a ledge.

A rustling still sounded from the ridges of the wood, but the lake lay quiet, and the little yellow reflections of the fluffy clouds soon stood motionless. In the infinite distance beyond the mist of the fen a goat-bell from time to time struck a few short, unresonant strokes. Two herd-girls blew

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quaveringly on their cow-horns, and on the forgotten and dilapidated sepulchre-mound in the dip of the valley the glow-worms kindled their lanterns in the grass.

"Are you one of those that have run away from war service?" a voice asked him, and when he looked up, a goat-girl was standing among the juniper bushes, knitting. She appeared to be one or two years older than he, and her leather boots hung on her back.

"That's right enough; but now the fen bars my way, and berries and ferns get to be scant fare after a while."

"It must be you don't know the woods. Nobody suffers want there. Since my ninth year I've spent every summer up here in the wilds with my goats. Trim and cut down a couple of fir saplings and tie them to your feet with withes, and you can go on the quagmire wherever you like. Thatch your hut with fir bark and make yourself fishing-gear."

She carefully pulled a long basting-thread from her jacket and tied to it a pewter pin, which she had taken from her head-dress and bent into a hook.

"Here you have a hook and line," she said and continued on her way, still knitting.

That night he did not much heed her advice, but when the sun again shone into his eyes, he pulled out his knife.

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As soon as he had trimmed himself a couple of skis of the sort she had taught him to make, he betook himself out on the fen to the island. When he stamped on the grass there, the whole island swayed like a soft feather-bed, but he opined that this was good, because if there was moisture in the ground, he would not need to go far to find angle-worms. Hardly, too, had he dug under the grass-roots with his fingers, before he found abundance. To be sure, the fishing went badly at the start, but after he had mystically laid two blades of sedge crosswise on the water, it became at once a different affair. As he carried a tinder-box in his jacket, it was an easy matter to broil his savory capture.

Afterwards he began to build his hut with such haste that he did not give himself leisure to sleep in the bright summer nights. He understood that it might easily tumble in on the swaying ground if he made it too high. Therefore he built instead a low turf-thatched roof-tree, under which he could not stand upright but had to creep. Every morning he fetched from the shore trimmed saplings, twigs, and pieces of fir bark. Finally he built a hearth of stones, where he let the juniper twigs smoulder and glow all night to drive off the midges. During his work he sometimes talked to himself half aloud, pretending that he was the overseer of a whole gang of workmen, and he called the island Wander Isle.

He met the goat-girl quite often. Her name was

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Lena. She went about with her knitting, feeding her charges on clearings and meadows. She taught him to set nooses and traps. Eventually they met every morning to see whether the fortune of hunting had been favorable to them, and she made him a good friend to all the wild animals.

"Did you see that gorgeous bird?" she asked, pointing to a blue-black black-cock that roused the whole wood with his thunderous wing-beats. "Him I call the Rich Bachelor of Växjö, for he asks neither after his home nor his relatives, but just sits at the tavern in his fine dress-coat and greases his wattles."

"And just hark now!" she said one night when an owl hooted in the ravine. "Him I call the Tax Collector, who, when he turns his head in his white collar and rolls his red eyes or snaps his bill, frightens both man and beast. But if it's a question of the little white harmless eggs in his own nest, then you'll see. Then he has a father's heart in the right place."

But about nothing did she know so many traditions as about the cranes.

"Never yet," she said, "have I got a glimpse of the long-legged, bald-headed cranes when they set up their trumpeting from the bog and hold their autumn assembly before taking flight. Round their camp they have outposts that sit each with a stone in his one uplifted claw, so that it may tumble down

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and wake him if he falls asleep. But the most wonderful thing is that if any human being sees the ashen-gray birds go up, he himself begins to flap with his arms and longs to be able to fly with them so high that the lakes below on the earth are only like little shimmering water-drops."

"I want to see the cranes," answered Johannes.

"Perhaps you may get to see them in the autumn, but then you must first teach yourself a great deal. First, you must be able to stand so quiet that you look like a dry juniper bush, and to bend down so that you look like a stone, and to lay yourself flat on the ground so that no one can tell you from a pile of rotten twigs."

"All that I shall try to teach myself, but you must never go on my island. It is n't the way you think there. I have a high fireplace and hangings on the walls, and the floor between the rugs is so shining and slippery that you can't walk on it, but have to crawl."

The pretty stories he had read in the dean's books ran in his memory, and he wanted to show the girl that he was not inferior to her, but could in turn rouse her to wonder and curiosity.

"If you 'll let me get a sight of that house, I 'll go down to the settlement and fetch you a musketoon with bullets and powder-horn."

"To my island you 'll never come."

"If you 'll let me get a sight of that house, I 'll

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teach you in five days to feed yourself on ferns and roots and nothing."

"That 's why I 've come hither. Keep that promise, and you shall see my house, if you can really get there."

With that he fastened the skis on his feet and vanished in the mist on the fen.

"The enemy stand on the shore," he said to his imaginary soldiers on the island, "but they have neither axe nor knife for making skis. We may feel secure, if only we always remain upright and good."

But late in the evening, when he was about to lay fresh juniper on the hearth, he saw the goat-girl coming on the fen with the help of twigs and dry branches.

"The enemy thinks to take us by storm," he continued, "but there is a secret which I have long suspected. I shall make the whole Wander Isle sail to sea like a boat."

He pressed a pole against the outermost tussocks of the fen, and the floating island swam swaying further out on the water.

Then he laid himself calmly to sleep by the crackling embers, but when after a while he suddenly opened his eyes, the goat-girl stood straight before him and peeped in under the low roof on which fox-skins lay spread inside out to dry.

She asked him nothing about the high fireplace or the hangings or the slippery floor, but merely

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said, "A fresh breeze has blown up, so that the island has driven to land on the other shore. But why do you let the dry fox-skins lie on the roof instead of spreading them in here on the ground? And we ought to stick in juniper around the island so that people can't see either us or the hut."

He thought she spoke sensibly, and went ashore at once to collect the juniper. When it was already long after midnight, they still worked at the strengthening and beautifying of his island. They even made of birch-bark and pegs a door which they could set before the entrance, and when they finally shoved the island off from the land again, they anchored it out in the water with two piles.

"Now the drawbridge is raised," said Johannes, "and we must see to providing the new guests with entertainment such as is right."

"The cook-maids and scullery-maids are always so slow," she said, and turned the two fish upon the hearth.

The heather droned, and the lake splashed, so that the island and the sedge and all the closed water-lilies swayed. As soon as mealtime had passed, Johannes lay down inside nearest the hearth, but Lena, who did not yet feel that she possessed the right of ownership to Wander Isle, huddled together outside at the entrance with one hand as a pillow. She still heard the juniper sputter with heart's delight, and as she fell asleep she counted

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the small sparks that sailed forth above the chink in the roof like stars through the night air. That was the fifth — that was the sixth — that was the seventh. So she was put in mind of one of her songs:

It was on the seventh morn of the week,
When the prayer-bells rang, I ween,
That the bitter tears ran a-down her cheek,
Though her bride-wreath still was green.

Next day she no longer thought of leaving the island, and the third day, without noticing it, they began to say "our island." Every morning they landed at the rock, and then she went up to the clearing with her goats or followed him to examine nooses and traps. At last she began also to teach him the art of feeding himself for many days on berries and ferns and nothing, and she noticed that he soon won even greater aptitude in this than she had herself. He grew thin and dry as a blown-off branch, and yet his sinews knotted themselves all the harder. But he always remained quiet and taciturn, and when she asked him what weighed on his mind, he went off on his own paths and remained away long.

They no longer knew the names of the days, but on the Sabbath the wind carried the distant sound of the bells far into the wilderness, and then Johannes put on his embroidered leather coat and led her upon the overgrown sepulchre-mound,

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from which they could see over fen and lake. With her hand in his he spoke then of God's love, which covered the wretchedest crevices with its fairest bounties, and often they knelt in the grass for long periods and prayed that He would likewise sow a few grains of His seed in their souls.

After such conversations, however, Johannes was always doubly heavy in mind and sought for solitude.

The nights became ever darker, and often when she turned back from her herd she had to light her way with a torch between mountain walls and the bared roots of trees. The yews, heaven high, were like tents, where black hands sprawled out through the ragged seams to seize her by the braids; but she felt no fear, she thought only of one thing. Wherever she went and whatever she busied herself with, she only thought that the summer would soon be ended and that no one could know what would then become of Johannes and her.

Then one October morning she was wakened by Johannes.

"Do you remember the cranes you spoke of?" he asked. "Now I can both stand so quiet that I look like a dry juniper bush, and bend down so that I look like a stone, and lie down flat on the ground so that no one can tell me from a pile of rotten twigs. I have taught myself more than that. I can feed myself on berries and roots, and if those are wanting, I can starve along on nothing."

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She sat up and listened to a far-off noise.

"That is no crane."

"Then I 'll investigate what it is."

He washed himself in the lake, put on his leather coat as on a Sunday, and pushed her gently aside when she wanted to hold him back.

"Don't go, Johannes!" she begged. "I won't let you go from me without following."

In silence they came ashore with the island at the ledge and went down through the woods toward the settled land to a bare clearing, from which there was a free outlook over the mossy heath and meadows as far as Kerstin Bure's mill and the church.

"Johannes!" she burst out with almost a scream, and seized him tightly by the coat tail. "Come back with me to our place!"

He answered her meekly: "My conscience has pained me long enough. Do you see down there on the heath the gray creatures with thin legs? And the outposts that you told about are standing there too. It 's Mons Bock, who is out again on his recruiting. In that crane-dance I 'd like to play myself."

He walked violently away from her, so that the coat tail was torn off at the cracking seam, and began to run down to the heath between the ferns and the charred stumps.

She followed irresolutely after him, but when she saw how he spoke to the outposts, and stepped

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straight into the assembled crowd of armed peasants, she went at a warm pace to get to him.

When she came into the ring, he already stood before Mons Bock and was taking his recruit penny.

"Where have you stuck your knapsack, Smålander?" asked the general.

"I have no knapsack, but I can feed myself for five days on nothing."

Lena pressed forward between him and the general's dark brown horse.

"He, Johannes here, is no serving-boy, but we have a place of our own up in the woods."

"As to the marriage, I should much like to see the certificate in black and white," answered Mons Bock, and the hot color rose and fell on his forehead as he spoke.

Then Lena held out in her two hands the torn-off coat tail, and let him see that it fitted to the leather coat.

"I call that a parson's certificate on real sheepskin," he broke out. "The recruit money may therefore be yours, my good young lady, but the boy has been clean sworn in. And now, ye worthy yeomen of Småland, forward in Jesus' name! Drums we have none, but we can still in our poverty stamp with wooden shoes the old Swedish march that makes me warm at heart to hear."

Staffs and wooden shoes banged and clattered on

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rocks and ledges. Even the riders had wooden shoes tied fast to their feet, so that they tried in vain to use their stirrups.

When the last farmers had vanished across the heath, Lena went on to the mill. She dared not relate that Johannes had gone along to the war, but told only of how she had met him in the woods, exhibiting the coat tail, which was carefully inspected and turned over.

"That's the right coat tail, sure enough," said Kerstin Bure, "and though I don't like to see women in my service, you may as well stay with me till Johannes comes. I really need a pair of strong arms, for I am well on in years and all my men have been bitten with madness and have run off with Stenbock. There is hardly an able-bodied man left in the parish, except the sexton, the fool!"

After she had said this she spoke no more to Lena of what had passed in the woods, and asked nothing about Johannes, but silently continued her occupations as was her custom. The mill stood with unmoving wings, because there was no meal to grind, and through the long snowy months of winter there was heard in it neither steps nor voices. Beggars who went past on the road supposed it was unoccupied and deserted.

When the spring began to reappear, and white trailing clouds swept across the heavens, there came

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one day a boy, hot and panting, who ran along the road and to each and all whom he met shouted a single word, until he vanished in the woods on the other side of the heather. Some hours later a rider came at a gallop and shouted in the same manner on all sides until he was gone. The women gathered in crowds on the church grounds—Sweden, Sweden was saved, and Mons Bock and his goat-boys had beaten the whole enemy's army at the Straits of Öresund!

Kerstin Bure alone asked nobody what had happened, but sat every noon on the mill stairs in the glorious sunshine and carded wool with Lena. All at once, as they were sitting silent and busy, while the spring freshet purled in ditches and brooks, they heard that the bells were ringing in the neighboring parishes to the south, although it was Wednesday. Expectantly the people ranged themselves along the road on both sides, and from the wide-open door of the church advanced the tottering pastor of the congregation, followed by his chaplains and in full ceremonials.

Once more the well-known march of the wooden shoes clattered on ledges and stones, but now to bagpipes and shawms. It was the returning army of farmers. There were deep lines of shaggy beards and slashed sheepskin coats and honest blue eyes. With staves in hand, muskets in the strap, and wide hats over their flowing hair, the homeward-bound

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troops marched back from their victory. Far in the van the tidings-mace went from church to church as far as the northernmost wooden chapels, where the Lapps tied their reindeer to the bell-towers. All the sunny springtime of Sweden was filled with the song of praise that reëchoed from the bells.

Just in front of the hay-wagons with the wounded rode Mons Bock in his gray overcoat with his riding-whip instead of a sword. Calling down blessings upon their saviour, the peasants hailed him with waving aprons and caps, but he turned to his ensigns and shouted that they should sing.

When the voices ceased, Mons Bock went on alone and sang stanza after stanza which he himself had put together.

Kerstin Bure had risen on the mill stairs and looked and looked beneath her lifted hand, but Lena, who had broken her way through so fearlessly in the thickets of the wilderness, did not dare this time to wait and look about any longer, but stole away and threw herself sobbing among the empty meal-sacks.

Step by step, Kerstin Bure withdrew up the stairs until she stood at the very top with her back against the wall of the mill. Then she pressed her hands like opera-glasses to her eyes. In the last wagon Johannes sat on the hay among the wounded, as merry and quiet as always, but paler and with bandages around his arm and shoulder.

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She pressed her hands even harder to her eyes.

"So after all he was what I thought him, though to prove his soul thoroughly I commanded him otherwise. Then, though he is Kerstin Bure's foster-son, he shall still keep for his life long her whom he himself has chosen, even if she is the poorest of goat-girls."

But at that moment she heard how the sexton and his ringer clattered at the trap-doors of the steeple, and the great bell gave forth its first stroke.

She knitted her brow and went into the mill, saying: "I 've no meal to grind, but if he lets his bell sound, though he has had no son in the war, my mill shall play, too."

Creaking, the dust-white axle-beam began to move and purr, and while the peasant army marched by singing, the empty mill kept turning its great wings faster and faster.

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THE sultan, who was going about the streets in disguise with a fig basket on his head, talking searchingly with the populace and many of the Janisaries, met his mother in the seraglio garden.

She swept aside the veil from her wrinkled forehead and threw back her arms.

"The people are minded for war," she said. "When will you gather them again and help my Northern lion against the czar? Command your soldiers to bear Mohammed's banner above the head of the Swedish king and follow him to the combat!"

The sultan set the basket of figs on a stone table, and answered: "I knew but little of him when he came to my land as a fugitive. Soon men and women spoke of nothing else than of him. How, I asked myself, can a lonely, impoverished fugitive without authority conquer a whole people so by his mere presence? I hardly understood it, but wished to give him my hand graciously, although he was an infidel, and I sent my soldiers against his enemies. The people fired salutes of welcome and lighted lamps in the towers of the mosques. At the river Pruth the armies met. — But hearken to me! Peace was made. Then my grand vizier beheld far out in the stream a man on a swimming horse. It was the Swedish king, who had come

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spurring with his cavalry from Bender. My grand vizier has told me all very exactly, and his voice still trembles when he speaks of that time. Without saluting, the king galloped to his tent and, wet through as he was with the water of the river, sat down at the head of the divan under the banner of Mohammed. He required to have at once the newly signed treaty of peace, so that he might tear it to pieces. There, then, hundreds of miles from his own provinces, sat the beaten fugitive with Mohammed's banner over his bald head, and, proudly as if his realm had extended down even to the Arabian deserts, he commanded my armies to continue the strife. It was a windy day. The tent-cloth flapped and beat. Now and then the banner rustled, and when he lifted his clenched hand, he struck his gauntlet against the sacred green tassels. — But, I say to you, peace was made. Other times have come. Every day I have had money and gifts of many sorts delivered at Bender to your hero. I have treated him as my guest, but instead of returning to his own people, he remains year after year. My grand vizier counsels me no longer to lavish gifts on the uninvited strangers, from whom we have little advantage to hope. They are too poor to be capable of any great achievement. There, mother, you have the truth."

It grew dark while he spoke, but that same night the Swedish lords who had been sent to the city

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of the sultan conferred together in the house of Thomas Funck. They spoke together in anxious whispers, and when it began to draw towards morning, Funck pushed the candlestick across the table to the military preacher, Agrell.

"Read something for us from the Scriptures before we disperse, for with all our deliberation we have got nowhere. The grand vizier did indeed conduct his soldiers to the firing line, but he set a higher value on a full purse and pretty slave-girls than on bullet-wounds in his white arms. At the river Pruth he had his turban brimmed with Russian bribes. Since then the Turks are against us. But Gustaf Celsing, with his readiness in their speech, might easily compose a letter of complaint. Still, who could bring it to the sultan's own hands? He does of course receive such letters when he rides to the mosque on Fridays, but we all know that he who has the foolhardiness to present such a letter is at once arrested, and if he cannot prove point by point the truth of the writing, he is executed without mercy. And who here has the proofs?—Therefore, I say, let us rather hear some words from the Scriptures, and then each and all may go home."

Herman Tersmed took the Bible from the wall-shelf and laid it before Agrell.

"I have a true respect for open dealing," he said, "but at this stage I must agree with Funck. If our king had owned the treasury of France, he would

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have won far more provinces than he has lost. He would by this time be the greatest and mightiest among the princes of the earth. But poverty ties our hands. What are we, in fact? a great power with a beggar's staff in our hand."

During the whole conversation Celsing, the secretary of the commission, sat at the end of the table facing the closed window-shutters. Unknown to the others, he had already composed beforehand a letter of complaint to the sultan; he could feel it under his coat with his hand, but he did not yet know to whom he should dare to entrust his plans. The day that is now glimmering, he thought, is a Friday, and the sultan will then ride to the mosque. While the dawn comes, I will carefully note which of those present is struck by the sunbeam from the chink between the shutters, and I pray the good God that He may in that manner point out the man who is most worthy to become His instrument. To that man I shall then turn in trust and confidence.

Engrossed in his thoughts, he could only momentarily follow the words that Agrell read in a melancholy voice by the guttering candle.

"And the woman was clad in a mantle of purple and scarlet, and she shone with precious stones. . . . And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and of the witnesses for Jesus, and I fell into a great wonderment when I saw her."

Celsing was inwardly ashamed at not being able

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to listen to Agrell more attentively. He continued to sit facing away, while he shaded his pale countenance with his hand. He heard how the city awoke, how quick steps echoed over the streets, how oars splashed, how the first breeze stirred the chestnut trees around the house, how the criers of the muezzin sent forth their song.

The chinks between the shutters already glowed. He dared not shift his hand from his cheek or move his chair.

From the middlemost crevice the first streak of the sun fell, bright and radiant, full into his own eyes.

He arose so violently that, stammering, he had to seek for an excuse.

"My good sirs, I do not feel quite well and am going up to my room to rest."

He understood that he was to seek no longer for coöperators, but was himself to be the only witness for truth. The morning light filled all his room. This was situated above that where the others were gathered, and the walls and flooring of the wooden house were so thin that he could still hear Agrell's voice.

He opened the chest of drawers, where a multitude of Turkish costumes and cloths lay stored to be used by him and his comrades at any time when they wished to be unknown. The gold lace and tassels glinted, and he slowly unbuttoned his Swed-

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ish coat and vest to exchange them for the foreign habiliments. But when he saw them lying on the bed, when he saw the rents sewed up after a sabre cut on the sleeve, and when he recognized in the worn lining the stitches with which his mother had sewed in his commission and passport, he did not want to let the old suit go out of his hands. He threw himself prone on the bed and drew the clothes together in an embrace, hiding his face in the lining of the coat as against a pillow.

"God, God!" he whispered, "this is the mission Thou hast given the Swedes, that they in the midst of an evil world should show what poverty and an open brow can avail. Was it not through their poverty that they were beaten? Was it not through their poverty that they became honored among men? If they had money to bribe the serail and were not ashamed to use it, all the soldiers of the sultan would stand beneath their banners. Is it not Thy will that where the czar pays with money, they should pay with their lives?"

Through the floor he still heard that Agrell read from the Bible: "And the kings of earth who lived with her in luxury shall weep and lament over her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance out of fear at her torments, saying: 'Alas, alas! woe for the great city of Babylon, that in one hour thy judgment has come!' And the merchants of the earth shall weep and lament over

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her, for no one buys their cargoes, their cargoes of gold and silver, of jewels and pearls, and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all odorous woods, and all their vessels of ivory, of costly woods, of copper, iron, and marble, their cinnamon and spices and ointments and incense, and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat, and beasts and sheep and horses, and chariots and men and slaves and bondmen—"

Celsing saw before him the great city and the sultan who approached on his horse, and he saw himself as he would present his letter. But with that it seemed to him that the turbans changed to chevril and dandelions in a garden, where bare-footed village urchins played with a boat of bark in a stream. On the bench up at the house his mother sat and showed him how neatly she had sewed his commission and passport under the lining of his coat. He rose, passed his hand over his brow, and burst out aloud as if he were speaking to her: "Rather than that the Swedes should become a byword and be hunted away like beggars, one of them might well lose his life."

"With whom are you talking?" asked Agrell, who at this moment was coming upstairs to the room. "You have locked the door on the inside, and left me no bed of repose."

Eagerly Celsing rolled up the garments in a cloth, and knotted the bundle firmly together

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again. At one corner he fastened a slip of paper, on which he wrote that he bequeathed everything to his servant, on condition that no stranger should wear his honest old Swedish uniform.

"Dear brother," he called to Agrell, "don't be annoyed at my oddness, but let me still remain alone with myself a few moments."

Meanwhile he pulled on the wrinkled Turkish trousers, thrust the slippers on his feet, and slipped his arms into the gold-embroidered jacket. As soon as he had hidden the letter of complaint in his girdle and put on the red turban, he cautiously opened the window.

Agrell sat down on the highest step, but jerked every now and then at the door-knob. Celsing is such a shy and reserved young man, he thought, that nobody can rightly know what he is about, but it would little suit such a home-keeping lad as he to throw himself into anything desperate.

He shook the door-knob yet again and said: "You were not born to undertake any fooleries, Brother Celsing, but in good time to settle mildly down and honorably cultivate your cabbage. But what does it mean that you are going back and forth across the floor without being willing to open the door?"

Instead of answering, Celsing opened the window and climbed quietly down to the ground on the branches of a chestnut tree, so that the warnings

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of friends or their parting hand-grasps should not rob him of self-command.

Among the trees a crowd of servants were going about in light blue coats with enormous gold and silver braid, so as outwardly to conceal the poverty of the expedition; but these were on the other side of the house. Without looking back, Celsing stole through the gate, and when at last he came out on the square between the church of St. Sophia and the serail, he stationed himself under the great tree among the beggars and cripples.

Here is the place, he thought, to which God has now assigned me. You poor fellows on crutches, you beggars who hardly have a stone to sleep on, learn from my countrymen the way to promotion!

He did not take his eyes from the Sublime Porte, where guarding capidgis held back the inquisitive with their sabres, and where, dripping after the heavy rain of the night, two severed heads were set on spikes in niches of the wall. Unused to the low slippers without heels, he felt himself shorter than usual, but when he rose on tiptoe, he could see over the turbans into the spacious Court of the Janisaries and beyond to the second gate, the Gate of Prosperity. There white eunuchs disclosed between the walls a path of gold-embroidered silk and swaying turban plumes. Bearded ulemas in violet cloaks and blue boots, agas with sky-blue mantles, and soldiers with high yellow caps leaned

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forward and watched the still closed door. Through this the sultan was to come. He knew it. He recited to himself from memory the final lines of the letter which his fingers clutched under the fold of the girdle: "This is written, not by any one's request, but for the sake of the truth and his oppressed countrymen, by the Swedish subject, Gustaf Celsing."

In that letter he had told of the venality of the grand vizier and the officials, but now, as all the gold and silk glittered in the sun, it seemed to him that he had still said too little. He recalled the cart with the sacks of straw on which his own sick king had driven across the steppes. He recalled how in Bender colonels and generals blackened the rents in their worn-out coats, so that their deficiencies might not strike the Turks in the eyes. And yet he had seen powerful ambassadors bow before these fugitives with a reverence more sincere than that with which the trembling onlookers now sank their turbans.

A silence of terror spread over the sea of men, and on high the callers-to-prayer sang from St. Sophia. He heard them hail the imperial descendant of Mohammed from the church whose convex canopy of stone had been built to the sound of psalms as a miracle of Christendom, and where the bones of holy martyrs were immured behind every twelfth layer of tiles. He took hold of a beggar's

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crutch so as to raise himself. In the Gate of Prosperity, as it opened, he distinguished the pyramidal head-dress and green kaftan of the grand vizier, the light blue stable-grooms, and the dark green agas of the sultanic stirrup. The red executioners came with their cords; coffee-bearers and water-bearers with their handcloths, trays, and golden pots; and finally, shaded by silken banners, approached the sultan, Achmed III, the lord of bridals and tulip festivals.

Celsing felt with both hands in his girdle and pulled forth the letter.

"God be gracious to the unfortunate!" murmured the beggars. "That is an insane man, who knows not what he does."

They grasped his jacket to hold him back, but they were too weak and infirm. Then one of the cripples began to beat him with a crutch, but he did not feel it, and with the letter raised above his head he pressed in through the Janisaries and placed himself in the path of the sultan.

The sultan, who sat somewhat bent forward in the saddle, was very pale, and his eyes were like firelight through misty panes. Without reining in his horse, he lowered his hand and received the letter, instantly hiding it in his pelisse of damask bordered with black fox.

The executioners now seized upon Celsing and led him across the Court of the Janisaries to a

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prison den which was situated under the Gate of Prosperity.

"You have dared to deliver a letter of complaint," they said. "May it be that you have also satisfactory proof for what you have written?"

He came to himself and said: "Proof? My word. Take my life, take my blood, as proof!"

Sighing, they shook their heads and left him in solitude, but on the prison wall fell a streak of daylight as warm and brilliant as the sunbeam that in the morning had determined him to sacrifice himself. This strengthened him in his resolve to await the consummation of his punishment with uplifted forehead.

He picked up a sharp piece of stone from the ground, and shortened the long hours with cutting words just where the sunbeam struck the wall. As the ray slowly shifted, he followed and worked out letter after letter. When the evening broke in, he had already engraved in his mother speech the following lines on the plaster of the remote death-prison:

I hungered, I froze
For the hero I chose.
Right gladly we bled,
And the noblest are dead.

When he had finished the word "dead," the beam faded, and it was dark. In the distance beyond the third and innermost gate, the Gate of Felicity,

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flutes and guitars sounded from the gardens of the serail.

Then unrest and anguish rose again in his mind, and he spoke half aloud, wringing his hands: "Women and gaieties I care for but little—and food and drink but little more. And all the bedizened satin of life that men long for? Vanity, vanity! What worth does it possess when once you get it? How well did I not sleep many a night with my old coat rolled up under my head! But out there in the world there is so much, so much that I went by coldly and indifferently. If I had my freedom again, I would be able to sit under the tree among the beggars and point to one of the small glittering lizards in the grass and rejoice at seeing it. O heart, heart, you that knock so heavily, why did you hang so empty in my breast when the light of day yet shone upon my path?"

Hour after hour he remained awake in the darkness, while all the more fervent grew his longing to see again his beam of light on the wall. Through the keyhole he could discern that pale moonlight lay over the earth, but around him all remained dark.

Then he threw himself down and proceeded to think out the verses that he would cut on the wall next morning. He believed that, if he became free, he would repeat and interpret the verses for the poor folk under the tree at the gate of the serail;

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but if he never saw the open sky again, perhaps some one of his unfortunate countrymen would take comfort in finding the Swedish words on the wall. When he had got the whole piece finished, he sat up and sang with a loud voice to the tune of an Easter song that he remembered from his boyhood:

I starved and I froze
For the hero I chose.
Right gladly we bled,
And the noblest are dead.
His squadrons are taken,
The old and the young.
His stars may not waken,
With clouds overhung.
In alien places
His men of proud races
As beggars must crouch.
Of straw is his couch,
Though reckoned most royal.
Ye hungering ones,
Behold on the stones
Your monarch, ye loyal!

While he was still singing, all of a sudden a red gleam shone through the fingers he held over his eyes. He rose. Was that the sunrise at last? But the red beam shifted restlessly back and forth on the wall, and he heard ever nearer the sound of voices. Then it grew dark again, and a bunch of keys clattered a long time at the lock.

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Two slaves entered with torches, and laid before him on the ground a knotted bundle. Thereupon one of them raised his torch and addressed him.

"The padishah greets you and says: So great is his respect for the Swedes and their king that he rather wishes to see you as his guest than as a prisoner. Your writing he will consider. Assume now the clothing that belongs to you, and go in peace to your house!"

Celsing knelt and opened the bundle, in which he found his Swedish garments. He lifted his coat up to the torch to see that it was really the right one. When he recognized the sabre cut on the sleeve and his mother's sewing on the yellow lining, he took off in the sight of the slaves the velvet Turkish costume and buttoned on again his worn but honorable uniform.

With his hat in front of him he stepped out into the moonlight, but when at the Sublime Porte he came to the beggars sleeping under the trees, he caught the nearest old man by the shoulders and kissed him.

"You do not know me," he said; "but if you did in truth, you would follow me to my people, and they would teach you the way to promotion. Often have I seen my king sleep as you do with a stone under his head."

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The Stupid Swede

ON a certain winter morning the mists lay on the Sea of Marmora like rugged islands of snow, but all the yellow minarets of Stamboul were already glowing as far down as their lowest balcony. A eunuch, who belonged to the sultan's mother, had betaken himself to the grave of his former master to pray. On the way home he bought at the market-place a white slave-girl who had attracted his notice by her tall figure. He followed behind her at the distance of a few steps, and from time to time pointed out the way with his silver-ornamented bamboo staff, but as often as not he kept shaking his head and thinking: What they will say this time not even a prophet could foresee. Why, she has feet like a bearer of iron.

He conducted her past the haughty, indifferent guards of the outer court in the serail, and turned down toward the water. There he knocked at a little insignificant garden gate which was almost hidden with creeping vines.

"My child," he said to the slave-girl while they waited, "the old man who is now coming with his keys is called the Deposed Messiah, and you may as well learn first as last that he is a dangerous and peculiar man. In his youth, it is said, he was called Sabathae and lived as a Jew in Smyrna. Then he began to preach that he was the second Messiah,

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but the governor ordered the bowmen to prove his invulnerability, and with that he renounced his holiness, and instead became porter in the serail."

The lock creaked, and the door was slowly and cautiously opened by an old man, who had a ragged brown shawl knotted around his waist like a belt. The eunuch condescendingly laid his black hand on the other's shoulder.

"I will give you a coin of shining silver, you old fellow, if before we go further you will tell the fortune of this new servant. Never have I brought a newcomer over your threshold in more perplexity. —Look here, woman, take my staff and draw a line with it on the sand of the path so that this man can interpret it and predict your future!"

As soon as the slave-girl had followed out this command, the Deposed Messiah bent over the sand and mumbled: "That is a straight line—it goes crosswise over the path to the border where poisonous vermin slink about under the roses. It is altogether straight, I say,—not a bend, not a flourish. Keep your coin, master; such a straight line has nothing to foretell. This woman's fortune I cannot predict."

"You may then take the reward you have long deserved, old impostor," answered the eunuch, as he took his staff and let it fall across the back of the Deposed Messiah. "Do you remember when you preached and taught that you were a prophet of

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God, who would one day come riding on a wild beast with reins of seven-headed serpents?"

The Deposed Messiah stood a moment on one foot like a crane and scratched the inside of his knee with the other. After that he took a couple of steps back, and his little wrinkled face was distorted while he raised his hands and hissed, "Cuffs and blows I get on your account, unknown woman. Be you accursed, and may serpents and scorpions cause your death! Now I 've told your fortune."

When he had said this, he again carefully locked the gate behind them, and limped off across the pebbles by the water.

Meanwhile the eunuch had already taken the slave-girl by the arm and led her up a steep stone flight of steps between walls as high as those of a fortress. They came up to a pleasure-garden, where the paths were strewn with broken conch-shells that crackled softly under their tread, and he made a sign to her to walk slowly in reverent silence. Between the cypresses gilded cages with song-birds hung on cords, small fountains plashed and dripped into basins of Parian marble, and through a long archway of sighing myrtle and boxwood he led her out on a promontory facing the sea.

In a circle of plane-trees stood a white kiosk with a fluted curving roof, and crescents and stars on the spires; and on the rug before the door a couple of nurses babbled caressingly in low tones with some

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children whom they were teaching to walk. In the middle of the doorway a white-haired woman in a pelisse of sable that reached to her feet sat upon cushions, knotting a white ribbon rosette around the shaft of a child's rattle of pure gold. It was the Bee of the Rosebuds, the sultan's mother, the wondrously beautiful Greek from Retimo, who in the bloom of her youth, when her lips were still like the dew of spring, had made Mohammed IV mad with submissive love.

How well the elderly sultana remembered the terrible hours when the torches of the Janisaries shone over the courts, and her dethroned husband retired to the innermost chambers of the palace to prepare himself with prayers and meditation on death for imprisonment and the grave. She could still see herself in the long years when in the serail of Eski, the gloomy home for superannuated women of the harem, she went sleepless back and forth over the carpets and wrung her hands, while the son of a rival, engrossed in theological discourse with softas and astrologers, breathed out his chill over the citadel of the earlier sultans. Best of all, however, she recollected the morning when a son of her own blood received the oath of allegiance in the acclaim of the Janisaries, when once more she saw from her portable chair the Gate of Felicity rise to the cornice, and grasped the sceptre of authority with a hand as firm and tranquil as that

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with which she now held the rattle of her grandchild. Her countenance was yellowish and sharp, but an infinite charm hovered over her melancholy smile.

The eunuch threw himself down prone on the rug, but raised himself again at a sign from her and began to speak:

"Once upon a time in Haivanserai a child found a great diamond of the fairest water. No one, noble sultana, no one knew how it had come thither, but a learned alim related that just in that place, on a day of triumph, the crown of the Emperor Justinian had been lost. You have doubtless also heard, noble sultana, that a poor man once found a splendid diamond on a rubbish heap close to the Gate of Egri-kapu. So little did he suspect the value of the stone that he exchanged it for three silver spoons, but now that stone holds together the tuft of plumes on your son's turban. Precious things of all sorts lie hidden from of old in the gravel heaps of this city and perhaps in the ground beneath us here, but when the treasure-seeker comes with his spade, he searches in the wrong place, and finds only bones and mouldered fragments of masonry. After that fashion, too, it often goes with me, your servant, when I am to buy slave-girls. For a whole year I have anxiously borne your command to provide a tall and yellow-haired girl. The freshest spring water has tasted brackish to me, and the softest

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sleeping-rug has seemed to me harder than one of the stone stairs in Seven Towers, because the thought of your desire has not granted me any peace. To-day for the first time—just when I had forgotten my disquiet for a short period, and was going to pray at your husband's grave—the gracious God let me quite unexpectedly get sight of such a slave as you wished."

He lifted off the plain shawl which the slave-girl wore over her head, and there stood a woman with fair, tightly combed hair and a clear, open expression.

The sultana laid the rattle on her knee and answered, smiling: "One night in Ramadan my son dreamed that he saw me embrace and kiss a tall, yellow-haired slave-girl. As there is no such in all the serail, the dream made me inquisitive. I know not well, though, what office we shall give to this newly arrived servant. She is too tall and awkward to become a dancer or to serve my son. Above all things he loves small feet and small hands."

"Assuredly," answered the eunuch, as he noted how little his purchase pleased the sultana; "but as yet I have not by any means related to you the most remarkable thing about this woman. I myself should indeed hardly dare to believe my own speech, if the slave-dealer had not affirmed the truth of it on his own salvation. I know him and know that he is an exceedingly pious and righteous

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merchant, who has never deceived us either in respect to the slaves' ages or places of birth. Furthermore, this woman already knows many words of our speech, and has herself attested that the slave-dealer speaks the truth. Hear me, therefore, noble sultana, and judge whether I have ever had a more marvellous jewel to present to you! With what enthusiasm are you not wont to speak of your lion at Bender, the great king of the Swedes! Now this poor woman is a daughter of his people and was born in his remote kingdom, where there is neither grass nor flowers, but deep snow lies in the middle of the summer."

The erstwhile indifferent sultana threw the rattle aside and rose, full of confused wonder. She forgot her own dignity and walked around the slave-girl, scrutinizing her carefully. She took her hands, raised them, examined them, and let them fall again. She opened her lips and inspected her teeth. She felt of her hair and skin, but during all this long investigation continued to smile steadily.

"Everything about this woman," she said, "is so large—the mouth and even the chin are large.—Girl, show me your legs!"

The slave-girl made an uncouth, awkward gesture of sudden disgust and turned away, mumbling in her own language: "Ugh, such foolery!"

"She is quite simple-minded," the eunuch observed conciliatingly. "I noticed that at once, and

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the merchant, who would not give false testimony as to that either, admitted that he had never come to give her any name, but used to call her just the Stupid Swede."

"Then she may as well keep the name until she deserves a better. — My child, show me now your legs!"

The Stupid Swede became still more vexed and bashful and held around her the long brown skirt with both hands.

"Lawks! can't you let me alone?"

"What does she say?"

"That I do nót know, noble sultana. But — perhaps she would do to carry the linen to the washing."

"No, she shall be the caretaker for my parrots, because none of my other attendants is able to lift their cages. Evening Starlight, who now has charge of the birds, is too slender and graceful a girl for the task, and may have a great future to look forward to. Meanwhile let her at the start instruct the newcomer carefully in her office."

The sultana, who had sated her curiosity and wearied of the conversation, went back to the door and called to the nurses to lead forward the children.

So the days passed, and Evening Starlight showed the new slave-girl how to tend and feed the parrots. In the hour before sunset the two often

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sat whispering together in the pleasure-garden among the parrot cages that had been lifted down; and Evening Starlight, who was a little thirteen-year-old Circassian and the youngest in the sultana's service, became devoted to the Stupid Swede. Once the sultana commanded that they should carry the oldest and most elegant of the parrots down to the shore in his silver cage, so that her favorite bird, which was sick and pining, might inhale the salt breeze fresh from the sea. When they had sat down on a bench by the cage, Evening Starlight wound her arms about her friend's broad shoulders, and began to question her about everything imaginable.

"Tell of yourself, and I 'll tell of myself."

"Little have I to tell. As a nurse girl I followed the wife of Major Eneberg from a city called Nyköping to a city called Riga. There I was married to a brave and God-fearing soldier who was named Andersson, but when the siege and famine came upon us, and Andersson tried to help some of us women to escape, I was captured by the Russians, bound and laid in a cart, and sold to the Turkish slave-dealer."

"Tell me one thing. Do you know the splendid story about the soul of the dance? No. Is there anything more blissful on earth than to dance?"

Evening Starlight arose, dancing softly, and turned around with eyes half closed so that her

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floating veil was like the blue-white rings of Persian incense.

"The Deposed Messiah has foretold that some day I shall get two hundred shawls and a kiosk carpeted with red damask. I truly believe that his words will be justified if I can but get to dance before the sultan. Do you know, I cannot sleep o' nights, but just lie awake and think of all that. Perhaps, I think every evening, perhaps even tomorrow I shall get to dance before the sultan. As yet he has hardly seen me.—About what do you mostly think? I mean, what do you long for, what do you hope for? For just nothing, you say? Can it really be any amusement for you only to go about and do your heavy and monotonous task with the parrots? I 've never yet heard any one praise that enjoyment. I think it 's a punishment to have to sit and feed those stupid wretches. You are a strange sister, and nobody rightly understands you."

The Stupid Swede sat stern and morose. She played with the ninety-year-old parrot in the cage, and tried to teach it some words in her native speech so as to hear a living creature utter them.

"Now do learn to say Andersson!" she enjoined.

But the proud and fastidious bird gurgled and shrieked, and would not do so.

Then she stared at the Venetian merchantman that, with gilded lanterns on its prow and surrounded by sea-gulls and caiques laden with gar-

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den-stuff, dried its loose-hanging sails in the sun. The pennants were so long that they reached down to the water, and the oarsmen scrambled to catch their tips, which were lifted by the sunset breeze.

For the first time she reflected upon her own fate. She thought that it was absurd and ridiculous, as if the sultana's hunchbacked story-teller had related it in jest, and while he spoke had shaken arm-rings, dry pods of rape-seed, parrot-feathers, and shreds of yarn in his cap. When she saw her own shadow stretched by the evening light over the glittering mosaics of the stone bench, she had to smile, as if in a sultan's mausoleum she had struck her knee upon Swedish settle-beds and chests of drawers, and had found a couple of cast-off Småland boots of goat-skin in the sacred prayer-niche. But to sink down in meditation with hands on knees was not her business, and she was suddenly aroused by steps on the paths.

There came the eye-doctor with wonder-working salve of collyrium in an agate box, but he himself was blind, so that he had to be led by both hands. There behind the hyacinths fluttered the light blue caftan of the Master of Flowers, and in portable chairs with carefully drawn lace curtains much-envied imperial concubines listened awhile to the plashing waves. With almost dismal menace that whole cloister, sanctified to earthly happiness, rose like a mountain, to whose uppermost heights only

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the boldest cliff-scaler of fortune dared to climb in order to pull to him its fruit or fall back a bloody corpse. Leafy plane-trees and oaks shaded the meadow-carpets along the shore. Above the nearest walls, behind hedges of myrtle and laurel bushes, extended the length of the harem building, imbedded in vines and roses, with wooden gratings before the little windows. But highest of all, where the all-powerful beings looked down upon their realm and mixed their ice-cold sherbet in bowls of roughly polished turquoises, the pines and cypresses soughed with the dusky green of a mountain forest, and the marble kiosks shone out like snow.

"The sun is sinking," said Evening Starlight. "Let us go out on the grass slope and play. Beloved sister, what are you pondering?"

"It is now almost a whole year that I have not heard a single passage of God's word.—But the air begins to be chilly, and it 's time to carry in the sick bird so that the poor thing may not take harm."

"Why should we trouble about the wretched beast? Nobody sees us. Come, beloved sister, take my hand."

The Stupid Swede sullenly lifted the heavy cage instead of replying. Step by step she carried it alone up the endless stairways to the top, and while the song of the callers-to-prayer from St. Sophia urged the faithful to kneel, she muttered to herself in her own speech: "One ought forsooth to think of one's

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duties, I trow, even if nobody always stands behind the bushes and glowers."

After that evening she was still more sulky and cross, and the other slave-girls stared after her, laughing, as she sought out her way through the innumerable corridors and long verandas of the harem, on which verandas eunuchs-in-waiting stood without thought and beheld the remote summits of Mount Olympus in Bithynia. Neither did little Evening Starlight any more throw her arms about her with the same childish fervor, but danced and hopped in her footsteps, or called to her out of nooks and corners: "Look after the sick bird!"

The Stupid Swede did not sorrow over her fate. She longed for nothing and hoped for nothing. She desired no more of the coming day than the past had given, but she went about in a constantly increasing vexation with all the alien and vain life about her. The parrots were soon the only creatures that with their chattering could entice her to answer, and in especial she took most tender care of the feeblest and oldest bird, which had seen nine sultans. She did this, not because it was the oldest and most distinguished, but because it was the most decrepit. The alabaster bowls and spoons from which it fed could never be sufficiently polished, and sometimes she sat up with her birds all night.

At last, however, the slave-girls noticed that

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she found other things than parrots to serve. One night well on in the summer, for instance, the eunuch had forgotten to fill the water-jug that always stood beside her sleeping-carpet, and when she had slept very peacefully awhile, she awoke and began to feel thirsty. Then it occurred to her that not a single drop of rain had fallen for many weeks, and that the tulips outside the kiosk must be as thirsty as she. The more burning and dry her throat became, the more clearly she imagined that she herself felt the torture of the flowers. Finally she rose, took one by one the well-filled jugs of the other sleeping slave-girls, and went out in the middle of the dark night and watered the tulip-beds. There she was seized by the eunuchs, who at first thought she had slipped out to steal. All this was long talked of in the harem, but the sultana continued gracious toward her. At times she even entrusted to her the purse, which otherwise she kept constantly under her clothing.

Late and early the guards saw the Stupid Swede with the food-bowls of the parrots, and to all questions alike she answered harshly. But if from the wall she recognized the Deposed Messiah, who stood on one leg like a crane in the splashing waves beyond the sun-white beach of pebbles, a shudder passed through her body.

It happened one day that the High Stewardess of the palace ordered her to carry the parrot-cages

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to the Kiosk of Peris, the nearest one to the sea, and to be there herself at sunset.

She answered as usual by mumbling some angry and incomprehensible words. She kept this up while she fetched the cages. Later, at dusk, when the tulip-beds were illuminated by countless little glass lamps, so that the whole garden seemed to stand out in a glow from subterranean fires, she put on the wretched skirt which she had not worn since the morning she stood in the slave-market.

When she entered the outer hall of the Kiosk of Peris, all the sultan's dancers had already assembled, with small circlets of parrot feathers on their necks and parrot feathers scattered over their skirts of silver gauze. In the middle of the circle stood the fattish High Stewardess with gold-mounted, quadrangular spectacles. In her hand she held a great roll of parchment, for she possessed great learning, was at home in the art of writing, and composed prettier verses and tales than any man in the whole city of the sultan.

"Look here, my child," she said, fastening a little feather circlet on the Stupid Swede's braided hair, "we are now going to delight our noble sultana, the mother of the padishah, with an ancient merry festival that is called the Crowning of the Parrots. All these slave-girls are skilled in the art of dancing. You alone do not know it. For precisely that reason you shall stand in the middle of the ring

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and try to mimic the others with your long arms and large feet—that will be the merriest foolery of all."

"Yes," repeated Evening Starlight, mimicking the High Stewardess behind her back, "that will be just the merriest foolery of all."

"No, that I could n't do," answered the Stupid Swede. "But folks can dance with us, too, though we take each other by the hand like this—and then we dance like this—and then we stamp the time as hard as we can like this—and then we sing like this: The lads are coming and . . ."

She had caught some of the dancers by the hand and drawn them with her, but the High Stewardess grew so frightened that the quadrangular spectacles slipped far down on her nose. She pulled from her pocket her short wand, which was completely covered with silver flakes and had a seal carved in the end, and with it she rapped briskly on the door-post.

"The sultana may at any hour whatever occupy the room on the other side of that curtain with her most distinguished friends and eunuchs. The Chief Historian is already sitting at his place in there to record everything and describe the festival in the Bridal Book. Are you mad that you set up such a disturbance? Such trampling may possibly do for mules that have chanced to knock over a beehive; but it is not dancing, for dancing is, before everything, beautiful."

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The dancers laughed with their mouths full of sugared chestnuts and bullaces. They wailed and lamented and had to sit down on divans, and the eunuchs hid their white teeth behind the door-curtains.

Then the Stupid Swede no longer knew what she did. All the vexation she had buried for weeks and months ran suddenly together in a single flame of wrath, and a flood of words in her harsh native speech streamed forth unchecked from her tongue.

"Devil 's in me if I care for you and all your ugly blackamoors. I don't care for you any more than that, you there that only live in surfeiting and wantonness and sin! You never talk of anything else than of the twelve lucky ones who get to wait on the padishah—lawk, the lucky ones, forsooth!—and of the seven imperial concubines who get two hundred shawls apiece. Is it right and decent to have a wife in every room around the whole house? Ugh, ugh, ugh! I am an honest woman; and an honest woman, look you, you 've never seen before in this abode of Satan. Ay, and now, drat me, you 're paid for calling me the Stupid Swede, you!"

"Very good!" said the High Stewardess, who without understanding a word had observed her slightest gesture. "Exceedingly good! You shall do just so when you come in and the dance begins. Only recite the verses in a somewhat lower voice. A little softer — and perhaps not quite so many

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jerks of the neck. One may show oneself a trifle pleasant even in the comic. Take this basket in your hands now. In it there is, as you may see, a fresh rosebush. I have myself had the Deposed Messiah dig it out of the earth with his fingers and plant it in the basket, because no one is more deft than he in such a matter. As soon as the dance is done, you are to step forward and with a kneeling salutation set down the basket on the mother-of-pearl table that stands before the most distinguished of the parrots."

Stiff as one of the cypresses that stood before the threshold of the kiosk, the Stupid Swede received the basket, but everything around her grew dark as she grasped it by the handle twisted with moss. She had become a mockery and a laughing-stock from the time when she had first been brought before the sultana, but she had heeded it little, and not before now, on this starry evening, when she was called to the kiosk to amuse the others by her mere presence, had she felt profoundly her helplessness and loneliness.

Pipes and drums began to sound on the other side of the curtain, and after some delay the High Stewardess rapped again with her wand on the doorpost. Then the curtain was drawn aside, and the dancers marched into the cupola hall of the kiosk, where the flower-crowned parrots stood under a temple of starlike lamps. Then the troop humbly

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saluted the sultana, who lay on a bed of cushions. The High Stewardess unrolled the parchment, and with much elegance recited her story.

"Noble parrots, ye who have received the beauty of flowers and human voices! This is the tale of the spirit of the dance. Not long since there lived a begging dervish who was called Turk. He slept on the bare ground, and went naked in the middle of the street without other clothing than a great turban. One day when he drank from a spring under an oak, he saw a boy who was playing music and dancing with a parrot, while he tried to fasten a ring of diamonds and rubies on one of its claws. 'Even if you are the son of a sultan,' said Turk, 'you ought not to think upon dancing and vanity. Learn that more precious than the dead diamond is the water-drop, because it can refresh your tongue; and more precious than the ruby is the drop of blood, because it bears the fire of life through your limbs.' The boy answered: 'Ungrateful and weary man! My father teaches me otherwise, for he says that the diamond and the ruby and everything fair upon the earth is as living as the blood in our hearts, and hangs like dew on the great tree that overshadows all the world and is called God's love. When I look up into that tree, I can neither sit nor lie, but the spirit of the dance comes over me so that I must arise from the ground.' When the boy had said this, he began again to dance so charm-

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ingly and softly that the begging dervish could not take his eyes from him, but felt that he himself must also dance. First, however, he wished to refresh himself with yet another draught of water, but when he bent down over the mirror of the spring, he became ashamed of his own ugliness and his unkempt beard, and sat there like some one paralyzed. Then the parrot flew to him commiseratingly, and sat on his turban with the sparkling ring on its foot and its white wings outspread like a wondrously beautiful tuft of plumes. The begging dervish again surveyed his image in the spring. Tremblingly he rose and danced with the boy, while he uttered a vow that his cloister-brothers from that day forth should thank and praise God with music and dancing. Noble parrots, it is in commemoration of that dance that we crown and salute you to-night."

As soon as the High Stewardess had finished this tale, the slave-girls, gently swaying, began to revolve and dance. They moved so quietly that their steps on the carpet were inaudible. Their costumes of gauze spread out around them in wide rings without making the smallest rustle, and the music sounded muffled and remote as a song from a galley far out on the sea.

With eyes closed, Evening Starlight raised her arms behind her neck, blissful that in the dance she could display and be herself conscious of her

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mild beauty. Her foot was no larger than a hand, and her hair hung to the bend of her knee. She knew nothing else of the earth than that it was sweet, and that the padishah might some day give her a kiosk with hangings of red damask and fountains of scented water.

In the midst of the softly whirling circle of human butterflies, the Stupid Swede had stood as it was commanded her, and the ostrich eggs and tassels that hung from the lamps grazed her hair. She did not know how tall and handsome she was as she stood there in her poor work-dress. She never once thought of it. She felt no happy gratitude to God because her expression was clear and open and her hair as soft as the silk of which the women at Brussa had woven the sultana's money-pouch. It never occurred to her that the earth was sweet, that the very rejoicing of the senses might be innocent. She had not received the spirit of the dance at birth. She could not raise her arms instinctively as she danced, like an inspired priestess. She could hardly sing thanks with her lips and still less with her limbs. God had not bestowed on her such a jewel as a christening present. She understood that all these Circassians and daughters of Lesbos were born in huts as she was, and were simple as she, but that still they possessed a knowledge which was not hers, knowledge of the mysteries of the dance. She looked obstinately down at the carpet, but she felt that the

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High Stewardess was all the while surveying her over her quadrangular spectacles with impatience and displeasure.

For a long time she tried pretending to notice nothing. Then she started and remembered the command to mimic, to be the fool in the play. Swaying her hips a little, she took a couple of steps. Immediately she heard around her in the hall a rustling and whispering, as when a puff of wind from the doorway hurls dry winter leaves over a stone floor.

When she looked up, she observed that it was the onlookers, who were whispering and laughing suppressedly, with hands before their mouths, at her awkwardness. She had succeeded, and had satisfied the High Stewardess, but shame and vexation struck her again into immobility. The reek of the lamps and the perfume of the flowers went to her head. When the dance finally came to a standstill, and she carried the basket to the most distinguished parrot, which sat, sunken and decrepit, blinking on its perch, she hardly saw any longer the carpet in front of her. Her hands began to fumble, and just as, kneeling, she held out her offering, the basket slipped on the smooth mother-of-pearl table, and the rose plant fell to the floor.

Then a whole swarm of scorpions crept over the edge of the basket, and from the earth at the bottom rose a snake with a flat, broad head.

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For a moment the snake swayed jerkily to and fro, as if even it had become possessed of the spirit of the dance. Then it drew itself together with a swift, wavy motion, and lifted its wide and hissing jaws toward the parrot. Flapping noisily, the frightened bird struck against the silver network of the cage to get to its caretaker and find protection. Through the whole kiosk, silent as the grave, where the laughter paled away, and dropped crowns of feathers lay strewn over the carpet, it uttered, screaming, the single word that she had most earnestly tried to teach it:

"Andersson! Andersson! Andersson!"

"There you said summat!" muttered the Stupid Swede. She had risen from the floor, and in a dream she saw that moment in the cool twilight when the Deposed Messiah had hid the snake and scorpions in the basket under the roots of the rose. But she no longer remembered that the terrified onlookers stood round about her, huddled up on cushions and divans along the walls of the hall.

Cautiously she took hold of the basket and carried it to the open window. The snake turned its head toward her and licked the air with its tongue. But when she drew her hand back, the snake had coiled itself about her arm. It struck her on the wrist so that the blood dropped down, and only let go its bite when she pressed it to the floor and stamped its head to pieces with her large foot. She

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took two or three steps to one side, and remained standing with her back against the wall.

Only now did whispering and talking begin again round her; but the proud, white-haired sultana, who had seen the Janisaries dismember the bodies of viziers before the serail gate, and had heard many a night the stealthy tread of "the dumb ones" on the shells of the garden paths, — she came forward, and examined the bleeding arm long with practised skill.

"My precious child," she said quietly, as she embraced and kissed the dying Swedish slave-girl, "you have saved with your life my favorite bird. But you have also given us a deep riddle to ponder. How, pray, could your duties and your tedious daily tasks with their constant monotony be so dear to you that all that we strain after seemed to you empty foolery and trifling? They have pointed the finger at you, because you did not understand the mysteries of the dance. — Alas! my child, they are easier to learn than it is to interpret your riddle. I would praise the God of our fathers, if He would permit such mothers to suckle our sons."

Afterwards, when the lamps were quenched, and the night was roaring outside, little Evening Star-light sat awake on her sleeping-carpet. — Was there, then, really something in the world that was worth more than shawls and jewels? Why had no one said so before?

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"You would not miss the dead slave-girl so bitterly," whispered some of her friends, "if you had not loved her and yet caused her sorrow. For such things there is no remedy."

"You would not grieve for her so," they whispered the following night, "if you had before loved a man. Now your whole heart is hers.—You are so passionate, you Circassians."

But the sultana said, "You have dark rings under your eyes, and I counsel you to begin coloring your lips, for if the padishah happens to see you as you now look, you are like to wait long for your kiosk and your red damask tapestries."

Evening Starlight died, and was buried on the slope above the cloister of the dancing dervishes at Scutari under the same acacia as the Swedish woman. The dervishes planted hyacinths around the tree, tended it long, and called the place the Grave of the Two Sisters.

"There lie two princesses," they would relate, "who lived long, long ago. The elder believed that God dwelt in pious employments and the younger that He dwelt in the dance, but for this they were called sisters, because they both contended in serving Him."

When on quiet evenings the small hand-drums and wooden flutes played in the cloister, it sounded as if a troop of boys were amusing themselves with toy fiddles from the bazaar, but through the open

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gate the pious dervishes now and again would come out in their white garments, barefoot or in stockings, and move about so softly and silently that they could hear the sigh of the acacia as they danced.

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Bender

THE thinning ranks that followed the king over the steppes to the kingdom of the sultan had pitched their camp at Bender in a charming river valley. Many an officer continued to live in his cart like a care-free gipsy, but the king got them to build huts and dens in the earth against the winter. He received daily from the sultan a sufficient gift of money and the necessities of life. There was gay commotion in the camp when the trumpets and drums called to meals and divine service. The pasha and his Janisaries vied with one another in paying honor to the conquered champion, who never tasted wine, who despised residence in a city, and whose body-guards were never allowed to marry. When the tillers of the soil and their wives saw the blue horsemen gallop out among the vineyards, they hastened to meet them, and coins of gold and silver rained into aprons and baskets. At last, however, the sultan wearied of filling the hands of his prodigal guests with gold and their bins with hay. Ducats again became a rare Shew Bread, and even the Turkish guard of honor which had been stationed at the camp marched away.

The king stepped out from his tent only when the overflowing water of the river came halfway up on his jack-boots.

He took Colonel Grothusen by the arm: "We

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have told them that we will not go back to Christendom before we have a following of fifty thousand Turks. To that we will stick. Now that they deny us money, we shall work wonders. The royal household shall be kept up three times as splendidly as before, and besides the king's table and the table of the Court Marshal, there shall every day be prepared here a plentiful board for strangers."

After that he went out and ordered the soldiers to build on the high bank before the straw-thatched huts of the village of Varnitsa a royal mansion and a whole town for warriors with streets and stone-paved walks.

This new town on the sultan's soil received the name of Carlopolis. With hearty energy the scarred warriors knotted leather aprons around their waists in the midst of the gaping Turks and began to forge the most elaborate locks or to fit the most elegant doors and window-sills. Generals and colonels familiar with victory took command of carpenters, master masons, plasterers, stone-cutters, and glass-makers in the hot sunlight, and in the midst of them the limping king went about with as rosy cheeks and cloudless forehead as if all the misfortunes of the Ukraine had long since been smoothed out of his remembrance.

Like a castle on the Rhine the royal mansion rose, with its steep roof and red balcony overlooking the rapid Dniester. Saddles of satin with rose

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diamonds and turquoises on holsters and trappings were hung around the tile-covered attic. Richly carved doors with brightly polished locks of brass opened from the entry to the two halls and eight rooms, which were adorned with French tapestries and divans furnished in brocade. The carpets were so thick and soft that the heaviest soldier-boots never awakened the slightest noise, and on the roof at evening flickered reddish lamps, as if to illuminate dancing slaves. Outside, streets extended between the droll little haphazard castles of the officers and officials. A handsome wooden bridge in the colors of the rainbow led over a deep ditch to Varnitsa, and around all the impudent-looking camp were thrown up walls and entrenchments. All this fortified town, then, did the diligent Swedes build as soon as they were without money. The unwitting beggar who went past along the river believed that the kindly country-folk had chosen one of their shepherds as king and had raised his capital city there in the midst of a realm of vineyards and cattle-calls and bird-twittering.

Outside the door of the royal mansion lay tame deer and roes, gazing on the threshold, ready to follow the king whenever he went out, and large-winged butterflies set themselves calmly to rest on the yellow flag of headquarters, which with the strange three crowns in its coat-of-arms stood stuck into the ground in front of the drums and muskets of the

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guard. In the shade of the mulberry trees on the slopes, which were overgrown with grass and flowers, naked and bathing warriors sat by the water without a thought of their former hardships, for they forgot the pain of their wounds on the same day they were healed and cicatrized. Others laughingly tried their muskets on snipe and hares, or strolled out around the plain among the cotton-plants and feeding herds of buffalo toward the rugged, far-stretching mountains that embraced the whole beautiful region with their dark blue wreath. Still feeling twinges of their severe wounds, Hård and Gierta lay in their shirt-sleeves beside a flask of wine on the greensward between the huts and played at *bête* with the noisy Axel Sparre. Kasten Feif hung up on the walls under his low roof the etchings of the new castle which had been sent from Stockholm. Without ever winning his point, he disputed there every morning with the king, who, more strict even than Tessin, would not hear of any statues or unnecessary adornments in architecture, but approved only noble lines and large surfaces. French Mons, who had now become so Turkish that only the most expensive tobacco was good enough for him, was sitting there with his pipe, but he had to hold and fill it with the same hand, because his left arm was shot away. The body physician, Skraggenstjerna, pounded powder in a kettle, while in the doorway above him hung jars and phials of plantain wood.

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Captain Konrad Sparre, who with his comrades, Loos and Gyllenskip, had just come back from a pilgrimage to the Nile and Jerusalem, had all his hut filled with images, mummies, and stuffed crocodiles. At a gesture there had grown up a dwarf city with its collections and offices, but many palaces were of such a height that the owners could stand and lean their elbows on the roof. The inhabitants awoke and went to sleep to the blare of trumpets, and early every morning, when the mist lifted, appeared a kind-looking man, who in stiff braided uniform, with his shoulders raised and lips drawn together in an expression of importance, rowed out on the river against the stream. It was Hultman, who was going with a tall pewter pot to fetch the clearest drinking water for his royal master.

Just where in autumn the long streak of migratory birds was wont to pass stood the gloomy, grayish-yellow fortress of Bender, with its quadrangle of pointed tower-hoods, and from it streamed daily a train of Janisaries, Tartars, Armenians, and gipsies. They jostled among the earthen huts of the Zaporogeans down by the river, where Mazeppa had died with his head on the knees of his women, and when they had got their camels and asses safely bound to trees, they stared inquisitively into the cook-house and at Brandklipper's ice-gray flank in the foremost box-stall of the stable. They offered

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on all sides their bunches of grapes, their sheep and fowls, and were at times held back with bayonets when a foreign emissary arrived to pay the Swedish king his respects in the midst of his exile and misfortune. Now and then they met a courier with a mail-bag, or a poor shoeless Pomeranian peasant, who had voluntarily walked the long distance across Europe to deliver to his king a hundred ducats for travel money. Thickest, however, did the tarbooshes and turbans swarm below the royal mansion, on whose balcony thirty musicians played on violins, lutes, and oboes. As soon as they were silent, the Turks below struck up with brazen cymbals, shawms, and drums. During all this the Janisaries embraced their Swedish friends or sat down contentedly and reflectively on the ground and stared at the open windows of the chancellery, where two odd figures bent, eagerly writing, over a table. Whenever the two gentlemen wished to look each other in the face, they had to turn their whole bodies, because neither had more than one eye. He who continually stuck his quill pen crosswise between his lips was the nap-worn Court Chancellor von Müller. The other, on the contrary, who had his pocket full of tidbits and every now and then laid a bit of candy on his tongue, was Colonel Grothusen. He sat enveloped in a crimson dressing-gown of silk. His neck-cloth of French lace and his curling, raven-black wig swayed and swelled,

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but on his feet he had a pair of heavy military boots, for one night the king had stolen in to him through the window and stuffed his satin slippers into a heap of embers. His face was yellower than a dried lemon, but his good eye glistened and blinked, and as soon as he opened his mouth, Müller began to bob on his chair and laugh.

Soon, however, clouds massed themselves over the mountains, and the soldiers drove sleighs in a merry-go-round with the Turks on the frozen Dniester, so that the turbans rolled along the ice. The windows were shut, and one lowering morning Grothusen threw his goose-quill pen from him with such vigor that it was blown over the table by the draught through the chinks and remained lying on the floor.

"Müller," said he, "for lack of hay we have now had to shoot nineteen fine led horses. If I can't quickly get together the loan of a thousand more purses, we're done for. In all Carlopolis there will soon be not so much as a horseshoe nail that can be called ours, no matter how I chaffer with both Christians and heathens. Credit is finished. Good! Away with the bank! We went off, not to gather money, but rather to abolish its worth."

He lifted his wig and passed his hand over his hot head, but Müller only wrote on, and inquired in a plaintive voice, "And His Majesty?"

"At the present moment he is sitting in the din-

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ing-room reading Corneille, but he has a trick up each of his sleeves, and is holding in his sides, as he always does when he has just come to some daring resolution. He is so happy over it that he warms one's sinful heart before one really knows what it is about. There is one thing, brother, that vexes me continually. The world is full of admirers who bawl His Majesty's praise, because he can sleep on a snow-drift and drink water from a wooden goblet. And in truth he is such a man, and rouses our astonishment every day with such things. I would only say that into the bargain he is something still greater. There are not only soldier crotchets under his hat. Listen to him disputing with Feif about the fine arts or with me about philosophy! And yet along with it are these—saving his honor—veritable little slovenlinesses, as that he can hardly scrawl a legible letter. Don't you recognize in all this the spiritual gifts of the Swede in their most brilliant form? A glittering web of the most gorgeous cloth-of-gold—with here and there great dark rents through which one can thrust his hand! Is it any wonder that the Swedes go to death for such a man as for themselves? Don't ask him to traipse home full of remorse like the prodigal son to show his empty trouser pockets. Tell me, rather, where the deuce are we to get money?"

Müller now stuck his pen behind his ear.

"The favorites both of Our Lord and our princes

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are sore beset with the envy of their fellow men, and you and your borrowing are discussed in the camp here with greater heat than you suspect. You 'll find out. Shut your account book in a hurry, hang your dressing-gown on the nail, and put on your old colonel's uniform, for in a couple of days we 're going to have a row. Even day before yesterday, when the pasha from Bender came riding up, cut the air with his sabre, and ordered us in the name of his great master to pack off home, I comprehended that His Majesty would come to a terrible resolution. And have you noticed that his sword is always three inches out of the scabbard exactly as in the old days?"

"Well, then, we 'll slash and cut—that's the only outcome. Hård longs for it so that his eyes flash.—Come in, come in!"

Grothusen turned about, and saluted the three men who crossed the threshold. One was named Axel Roos. He was a slim, brown-curled dragoon of the royal guard, and for him there was nothing else in the world than the honor of his country and his king. One of his comrades was Lieutenant Olof Åberg. His whole face, which was of a manful ugliness, was scarred with sword-cuts, and a shell splinter had broken both his front teeth. The last man, on the contrary, was but a plain life-guardsman, who was called Seved Tolvslag, but he was known as the strongest and tallest soldier in Carlopolis, and he

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could bend a horseshoe or squeeze together a pewter plate as an arm-cloth. Nobody had ever heard him laugh. With his sunburned, almost black face, he stood with equally terrible sternness, whether it was a question of a psalm or a game, and his greatest enjoyment in life was to go on duty alone and silent on cold nights with his hands stuck into his coat-sleeves.

"I have had you summoned," said Grothusen, throwing back his head, "because we consider you, without distinction of rank, our three bravest men. Go diligently about among officers and soldiers according to your various ranks, and inspire the wavering with courage. Soon we are likely to behold an affair that is going to surpass everything we have hitherto experienced. We have reached the bounds of the possible."

While he spoke, he changed his clothes. When he had hooked on his sword-belt in the most approved style, the window was darkened by a rider, who tapped on the pane.

It was the king.

He sat there as radiant as if he had just emptied a magic draught of eternal youth. His attire was as simple as always, but spotless, and his thin hair even was tied into a knot on his neck. The boy leaped up in his eyes, and he tapped yet again on the pane with his riding-whip.

"Grothusen, now we must go in to Bender."

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The irresolute colonel ran out on the stone step.

"But Your Majesty has never before been able to ride in there, and just now the storm-bell is ringing. They have wearied of their distinguished guests, and it is all over with the old friendship. Look for yourself! There is hardly a single Turk in the camp any longer. They hope the time is coming to cut us all down and plunder us to the naked body."

The king smiled and nodded assent.

Then a merry light spread over the brow of Grothusen, and the next moment his charger reared beside the king's.

Contrary to custom, the king rode his horse away over the plain at a trot. Under the projecting thatch of the huts between the gorgeously painted wooden pillars threatening crowds were already standing, armed with scythes and muskets, but the king waved to them with his glove as to underlings. In the muddy, unpaved streets of Bender the hucksters had hooked up the shutters before their booths, and armed soldiers and merchants were walking back and forth. They recited from memory the sultan's letter, which gave them the right to compel the Swedes by force to return home. They shouted one another down with wild war-cries, but when unexpectedly they recognized the king in their midst, when his horse trampled on their mantles and caftans, they lowered their spears

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and threw themselves down with their foreheads to the earth.

"Haha!" jubilated the younger girls behind the grating of the harems, "his head is too small for his body, and his body too small for his horrible boots. Haha!"

But the wives and the older women pushed them aside angrily.

"Allah, if we had but such a lord!"

With that they took the dried festoons of leaves which since the summer had been fastened along the window-sills. They threw leaves and flowers over him, so that a withered rose remained lying on his hat. Meanwhile the tower bells were ringing to call the inhabitants to arms against the Swedes and their king.

Calmly saluting as on a pleasure ride, he continued up street and down street, till the open plain again lay before the two riders in the sunset light.

Grothusen pointed over a low stone wall.

"Look at that grass mound beside the sainted Bishop Malmberg's last resting-place! That is Mazeppa's grave. Two wonderful words! Mazeppa's grave. Thus may earthly greatness end."

The king bent sidewise, and laid his hand familiarly on his favorite's knee.

"Grothusen, my good fellow, if a withered leaf falls to the ground a hundred years from to-day, that event is a consequence of innumerable other

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small and unnoticed events. That moment is a link in a chain of happenings which goes back finally to eternity and the creating hand of God. If, too, a leaf now falls to the ground, it is because just that event and no other can occur at this time. If we might see all that has happened as clearly as a row of figures, we should also be able to reckon out all that is to happen up to the end of the world. We should then be able to foretell the day, the hour, that will be our destruction. Let us not therefore waver with anxiety!"

Half with the awe of a subject and half with the tenderness of an enthusiastic friend, Grothusen took the hand of the king. He had seen that with his last brave followers among the vineyard hills of Varnitsa, far from the small importunities of government, the king had celebrated perhaps his most fortunate years, the Sabbath rest of his days, that he had come ever nearer to his followers as a good comrade. The cold February evening grew starry-clear and deep. By Mazeppa's grave Grothusen wanted to speak, but he had no longer power over his own voice.

"Journey home!" he whispered. "As true as I live, a Charles XII would become great as a peace king, and would accomplish what Christina never could do, because she was a frivolous woman. Journey home! There is a mutiny coming. Do not say I don't know the Swedes. They, like other

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men, have wives and children. If we got a great conquering Turkish army to follow us, then indeed we might found a Protestant confederation under a Swedish emperor. But it 's the same with Turks as with pearls: they cost money. Soon I shall no longer have a single ducat for bribery. We must bow, we must bow before our own poverty, our ancient, heavy, pitiful poverty. It is that and not men which has conquered us. — Ah, to see the door wide open and be turned away because of empty begging-sacks!"

When the king remained silent, Grothusen leaned nearer to him in the half-dusk, then sprang back. His own words had driven away the happy moment when he had sat alone with his king in rapt conversation. The friend had vanished behind a cold, though still smiling mask.

Then Grothusen tried to joke.

"Yes, if we had money, we should strengthen our camp with heavy cannon and make a Jomsborg of it in the midst of the enemy's country, and like the guards we should all pledge ourselves never to marry. Then we should abolish all money there and eat at a common table, but invite Leibnitz and other great men to sit on the bench of honor. With them we should gather the various doctrines into one declaration, so that our royal fortress, though without either land or vassals, should be a perpetual temple of truth and reconciliation. All that we

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should do.—But as things are, it remains for us only to yield or fight."

"It remains for us only to fight," answered the king, giving his charger the spurs with such violence that Grothusen remained there with the empty glove in his hand.

He turned and looked at the large glove. At length he kissed it and hid it under his coat next his heart, as he whispered: "There it shall stay until my bullet whistles."

In expectation of a siege, the Swedes opened a well a few steps from the royal mansion, where a cool running spring filled it with crystal-clear water. The women of Varnitsa believed that he who drank of that water became proof against both love and shot. They could see that best in old Grothusen, they thought. He drank only wine, and never tasted a single glass from the well, and he was therefore so lovesick that whenever he met a pretty girl he lifted his braided hat to her and chucked her under the chin with his dexter and middle fingers. The others of the band did not do so.

Åberg's wrinkled and grinning face was often mirrored in the well. With his mattock under his arm, he drank away his thirst, and then hastened to the soldiers at the entrenchments. Around all the camp they threw up a breastwork of barrels, bedsteads, carts, and the spadefuls of earth that they could break out of the frozen ground. The king

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himself stood and twined withes and ropes between chair-legs and wagon-wheels. The country-folk fled, so that the huts of Varnitsa became desolate, but a great boundless host of Turks and Tartars drew themselves up in a wide ring with their mortars and field-pieces. Late in the frosty nights a tall shape bent over the rim of the well and clattered the chain of the tin drinking-can. It was Seved Tolvslag on duty, after he had just helped some Janisaries to smuggle in secretly their baskets of fowls and sacks of hay. Close beside him in front of a lantern stood Grothusen, who, with his pelf borrowed from Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Jews, paid for everything at three times its value, as if he had awakened every morning with his jack-boots full of ducats.

Sometimes the Swedish dragoons dashed out on the plains in the bright daylight, and brought back buffaloes and sheep right under the eyes of the besiegers. Or, again, the king rode to the hostile sentries and reviewed them, seeing to it that they did their duty, as he taught them to shoulder arms in the Swedish fashion.

In the royal mansion the windows were filled to the height of a man with sacks of earth or barred with palisades. Hultman and the lackeys carried into the dining-room the long oaken chest with the table silver, and they stowed away among the soldiers in the attic the French tapestries and silken

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cushions, and the most important books and documents. Regimental rolls, Tessin's etchings, and French tragedies were embedded side by side under horse-trappings overlaid with gold and precious stones, and cartridge-boxes and muskets were dealt out to the royal watch. All the little city of the king, hundreds of miles from its native land, had hardly the equipment for as many men as would be needed to furnish a single full regiment. Even the ceremonious Court Chamberlain, Düben, with sweat on his brow, had to drill and exercise his lackeys, scullions, cup-bearers, and guardians of the silver. The chief cook, Boberg, was forced to throw his ladle on the shelf and tramp over stones with a broadsword on his arm between Hultman and the panting kitchen clerk. Bareheaded, hesitating, flurried, with coat-seams worn bright and with ink on his fingers, Müller marched at the head of his men of the chancellery.

"Look at His Majesty!" he whispered to Düben. "Recklessness is a joy to the soul. Honor has become so precious to him that if he can only keep it untarnished, then straightway no misfortune can trouble him any longer. But I say this, that for my part I will lay down my sword as soon as the brown savages outside shall storm up. Is it sense that five hundred men should fight with twenty or thirty thousand?"

When the king caught sight of the Holstein

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envoy, Fabrice, who for a last time rode out from Bender to the camp to move him to departure, he, as if by an accident, allowed his retinue to march forward to the Holsteiner. The Swedish gentlemen at once hastened to deliver into the envoy's keeping their pocket-books, snuff-boxes, and purses. When Fabrice finally rode away, he had such a plethora of valuables under his coat that he could not button it. Then the soldiers, too, began to hide their possessions. The last ducat, carried about for years, was ripped out of the vest lining and, together with a ring of silver or horsehair that had been given by a first sweetheart, was hidden in a fig, a tree trunk, or in the earth. Chamberlain Klysendorff himself stood with a spade in his hand among the soldiers on the slope of the shore and buried by a grapevine his old grandmother's portrait on ivory.

"I am far on in years," he said, "and broken with gout and infirmity. I have a foreboding that now I shall fall. Rather, though, will I entrust my belongings to the dark earth, whither I myself shall soon go down, than to greedy plunderers. Grass will come to grow and be green above the little love gifts and savings that we poor exiles conceal here in the alien earth."

When he had passed on the shovel to the next man, he heard the king's voice and turned around.

With burning cheeks like a boy of fifteen, but commanding to-day like an emperor over princes,

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the king sat on his horse at the outer entrenchments, and around him gathered the most distinguished of the Swedes. Gierta, who had risked his life for him at Poltava, and Hård, chieftain of the battle-loving guardsmen, were propped on their swords. With coaxing whispers, the court preacher, Brenner, leaned his full, cherubic face first to one, then to another. His coadjutor, Aurivillius, twitched him by the cloak, but General Daldorff tore away the shirt over his lacerated breast and spoke to the king without fear.

"Here," he shouted, pointing to his breast, "behold here the proof that we have always been ready to give our last drop of blood for the land of our fathers! We are ready now, too; but if we lay low all the Turks that are here, we shall immediately after have the whole might of the sultan upon us. We all know that not only Turkey but also the sea powers have offered to convey our king to his lands with the greatest honor, and the way through Germany is still open. The Turks have heaped gifts and friendship on us, but in return have gotten open contempt."

The king answered: "The Turks sell themselves to the highest bidder, and therefore they deserve contempt. Of old we fought like valiant warriors, but now you talk like poltroons. Obey, as is your duty, and show yourselves hereafter such as you were heretofore."

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With that he clapped Daldorff on the shoulder like a good comrade, without the least rancor, and rode to the royal mansion as the enemy's field-pieces began to roar.

Klysendorff, who was a timid and retiring man, remained standing among the soldiers, speaking to them softly.

"I know well that the world will judge our gracious king harshly for what is now likely to befall and hold him for a madman. But the Turks are greater madmen when they fancy they can frighten him off by force. Even though all should abandon him, do you show, you lesser men in the ranks, where faithfulness lies deepest in the breast!"

Piercing cries now filled all the lovely region, and the enemy stormed up, but Grothusen in his laced parade hat stood at the entrenchment, and saluted the Janisaries with the friendliest greetings and the most whimsical bravado. He took from his knapsack at random ducats, Albrecht dollars, and bits of candy. He strewed these indiscriminately on all sides, and when he pointed toward the camp, there shone above the royal mansion a triple rainbow, and before the door the king sat calmly and proudly on his steaming horse.

"No, no!" murmured the Janisaries, and swung their sabres toward their own forces while they marched back into the town. "We will not attack

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that iron-head. We are his friends. Let him have time for thought until to-morrow."

. . . . . .

It was Sunday, and in the king's mansion the Swedes struck up the first psalm of the morning service as if nothing were afoot. The sacks of earth and frozen water-barrels blocked the windows, so that the hall was like the dark corridor of a fortress. Two wax candles burned on the table, which was covered with a white cloth, and the minister bent far down over the Bible so that he might be able to read the text for the day.

"And when he went into the ship, his disciples followed him. And behold! a great storm arose upon the sea, so that the ship was deluged with the waves; but he slept."

The king stood nearest in front of the table with his fur cap in his hand. His resolution had been taken calmly and gladly, without debate, only with a longing. At Poltava misfortune had fallen upon him like a landslide in the dizziness of fever, and before he could raise himself from his sick-bed everything was devastated. Now he was once more master of himself. Year by year, day by day, he had seen the meshes breaking in the net he tried to weave, but which could be tied only with thread of gold. He burned with eagerness to be done at last

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with these stupid intrigues and in the full light of day appeal to the broadsword. Riga, Pernau, Reval, Viborg, Keksholm—each name, as it passed through his memory, pointed to lost cities and provinces. What more would it be if he fell? Earthly life was short, but the glory of battle deeds is everlasting.

The minister bent once more over the Bible.

"And his disciples went forward and wakened him, saying: Lord, help us! We perish."

At this moment one of the first cannon-balls struck the thick wall of the royal mansion, but remained stuck in the soft brickwork, and the minister proceeded.

"And he said unto them: O ye of little faith, why are ye afraid?"

An officer hurried forward to the king and whispered: "No one is likely to hear the words of the text any more for the noise, and now the Turks are storming."

The king answered: "We do not break off our divine service on account of shot, but each and all of us is likely to be needed at his post."

On the balcony of the royal mansion the musicians struck up with thundering kettledrums the Dalecarlian Polka and the Torch Dance. "Allah! Allah!" answered Turks and Tartars, and their white jackets fluttered, as they stormed in by thousands over the entrenchments, brandishing spear and scimitar. Some of the Janisaries, however, stuck

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their blades under their arms and with brotherly persuasion handed their tobacco pouches to their Swedish friends and acquaintances. When the king rode with drawn sword into the *mêlée*, he saw man after man of his people lay down his arms, and he reddened. He shouted to Grothusen and Daldorff, but no one answered him. Then he noticed that the strife had to do with himself alone, and those who were not willing to fight were likewise unworthy to do so.

"Those who still have courage and loyalty in their breasts may follow me," he shouted.

Seved Tolvslag then gathered about him the common soldiers and the scullions and lackeys who had just been painfully drilled in the first manual exercises. Fighting faithfully for life or death, they surrounded the king, as he sprang from his horse and ran his broadsword through the nearest Turks. In front of him went Seved Tolvslag like a swarthy berserk, presenting arms, but as soon as the enemy pressed into his way, he made a swing with his bayonet and cut a harvest for Death. A pistol was levelled at the king's temple, but as if moved by an invisible hand, he bent his head a finger's breadth aside—and the ball only grazed his face, but struck Hård, wounded, to the ground. He saw General Axel Sparre bound and stripped. Clashing swords and sabres cut deep notches in each other's edges. In a struggle with his own life-

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guardsman, Roos, and two Swedes, he was caught about the middle with an iron grasp and carried against his will into the royal mansion, whereupon the door was barred.

It was not thus that he wished for sword-play. The impatience of wrath and battle-lust kindled fever in his blood. With eyebrows scorched away, bleeding at the nose and ears, he mustered his band of forty warriors in the Court Chamberlain's apartment and nodded pleasantly to old Hultman, who with a great bandage round his head and a musket on his shoulder stood in line beside Wolberg and Groll and Friberg and all the bravest among the faithful. With knitted brow and flashing eyes, his long sword half raised, he rushed before his men through the halls and rooms where plunderers had already thronged in. Roos shot and fought by his heart side. The begrimed and toothless Åberg crouched under his arm like a grinning eunuch and aimed his sword thrusts up at the bellies and breasts of the Turks, but Seved Tolvslag went his undeviating way forward, seizing man after man by the beard and rolling him out through the window. He wrenched away weapons, broke them to pieces under his foot, and then threw the fragments out into the courtyard. Fire flamed and spurted from priming powder and pipes. Oho! the song of the crossed blades that sighed like harp-tones.

In the great hall, where the two half-consumed

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wax candles still shone on the open Bible text about the Master who awakened and rebuked the winds, the Swedes could distinguish one another only by their spurred boots under the thickly rising smoke. With a howl so wild that many of the younger men shuddered, the slippers of the Janisaries and the yellow half-boots and white jackets of the Tartars suddenly began to mount, clambering up into the very smoke, as on a stairway, and to vanish. Swords vainly hewed and stabbed on all sides without longer hitting anything but empty air.

"These are witch-folk," murmured Hultman, taking his stand beside the Bible, but the king pushed a water cask from the window so that the smoke streamed out. Then they discovered the plunderers hanging on doors and mouldings, and anew the dizzy lion hunt roared through the apartments.

When at last all the enemy were driven out, the king stationed his thirty-two surviving battle comrades in small groups at each window and himself went round among the dead, emptying the bullets and powder from the wallets on their shoulder-belts. Still bleeding, he let his wounded hand be bandaged by Roos, who had just saved him by a pistol-shot in a hand-to-hand struggle with two Turks.

"I see," he said, "that Roos has not abandoned me, but where, I wonder, are all the others, who have deserted?"

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"The greater part are likely to be dead or taken prisoners."

The king's glance blazed yet more at that, and taking Roos by the hand, he led him back to the great hall, from whose windows the muskets flung their fire against the ever approaching enemy. Deep dusk prevailed within, for it was already getting on towards twilight, but between the barrels and sacks of earth appeared the wide circle of baggage wagons, doors, and wine-vats, behind which the Turks drew nearer step by step, and the whole expanse of the courtyard was already covered with the fallen.

A keg of brandy was lifted down from the attic to still the grievous thirst, and he, the king whom no one had seen taste anything but water, went from man to man with the glass and enjoined them not to take more than a swallow apiece. But when finally the strong drink no longer gave refreshment, wine was fetched, and filling with it the same glass that had just gone from mouth to mouth among the soldiery, he drained it himself like an equal.

"It is better," said he, after another hour of raging strife, "that we should defend ourselves like valiant men to the last breath and so become immortal through our courage and our valor, than that we give ourselves up to the enemy so as to get a little longer time of life."

Along with the muskets' irregular rattle, cannon-

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balls and bombs rained on the solitary house, and arrows with long tails of burning tow bit themselves fast into the shingles of the roof. Meanwhile there spread for a moment through the smoke an unexpected scent of hay and fresh wood, as if the peaceful shepherd realm had sent a greeting from its fields and groves. Soon, however, a chief of the Janisaries came forward through the crowd with his men, like an executioner with his red-clad attendants. On their backs they carried bundles of hay and wood, but he himself held a torch of pitch. When all these combustibles had been laid on the windward side of the house, he threw the torch on the pile. Presently the fire leaped over the roof-trusses, and the valuables in the attic were enveloped in conflagration and smoke.

Alone and left behind among the dying, Klysendorff lay on the floor in a burning room, but every time he heard a new murmur of amazement, his pale countenance cleared. He could still distinguish far-off shouts from the Swedes in the courtyard. On the ice-covered ground plundered generals and colonels stood in only their shirts, with hands tied behind their backs. Tartars with laced guardsmen's hats on their necks and yellow or black wigs tied to their girdles were fastening the sons of Sweden's noblest families together on long chains and making slaves of them. They bound them to their wagons or drove them before with blows of the whip, and

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Gierta and Konrad Sparre were led off to be fettered by a well and water cattle. A Janisary came up to Brandklipper and clasped his shaggy hand around the wrought hilt of the sword which the eleventh Charles had carried, and the pasha had already sat down with crossed legs on the cushions in his tent to await the end of the fight.

From the hills, from the farthest minaret, and from the fortress of Bender, thousands of amazed spectators stared at the flaming Hercules-pyre. They saw how the king and the guardsmen, with coats over their heads, pressed up among the saddles in the attic to thrust off the shingle roof, but had to retreat again because of the shot and smoke. From room to room the band drew back under the tottering rafters and stones, shot at from all the windows, with their clothes on fire, and their faces and shoulders bleeding. In their heated muskets the shots went off of themselves. The Janisaries shouted to one another that either the Swedish Charles was a salamander or else he wanted to burn in there with his men. The whole region murmured with joy, but it was the joy of astonishment, not of revenge.

Dusk had fallen, but the light of the flames illuminated the expanse of the house, and through the uproar sounded the clear voice of the king: "My dear Roos, let us now defend ourselves with the few men we have left, until all is over!"

He himself now fought at the window with a car-

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bine. As if in pursuance of a silent resolve, he at last stepped forward to the shot-shattered bags of earth, and stood there alone.

Roos threw himself between and, stunned by a ball that struck the wadding out of his fur cap, sunk into his master's arms. Without stepping back, the king stood unflinching as ever with his noblest guardsman in his embrace.

Madly the Turks once again rushed forward at the window, but were felled to the ground, and the glowing sound-boarding illuminated the whole room as at a banquet.

"That Swedish Charles is having a festival," said the pasha. "Poltava was the people's day; this is his."

Then the door was unbarred. Wrapped in sparks, Seved Tolvslag stepped out on the stairs and presented arms.

"Make way!" he shouted. "The king, the king!"

At the apex in front of his men the king hurried straight out into the *mêlée*, and those who could not follow him defended themselves with backs against the wall. The dying and dead fell at his feet, and above his head the fighting broadswords met in a point like a tent of shining steel. Stumbling with his spurs, he was pressed to the ground and overpowered, so that the weapon could finally be wrested from his hand.

"The dance would have gone differently," he

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said, "if all had stood at their posts. Now it has been nothing to talk of."

As soon as he had risen, the flashing glance in his eyes was extinguished, and as a reward he divided all his ducats among the Janisaries who had been able to disarm him. Blackened with smoke beyond recognition, with one of the skirts torn from his coat, which was hewn to shreds, he mounted a white Turkish horse with a purple saddle, and with a rustle of triumph about him as if all the banners of Islam had just been laid for a carpet under the hoofs of his palfrey, he rode toward Bender and captivity.

He never once turned to look back at the flaming pyre. All night the flames spread forth their light. On the heaps of ashes in smoking Carlopolis the Turks stood with their spades, but as early as the dawn the women of Varnitsa began to fill their pitchers at the Swedish fountain with the crystal-pure water, which in coming times they were to offer strangers, and which made him who drank of it proof against both love and shot. Round about under the mulberry trees and growing grapevines slumbered the buried last ducats of the homeless warriors, with the image of their hero king in the superscription; and even for a long time afterwards, when the herdsmen and their wives harvested the fruit in the stormy days of autumn, they believed they could discern a rumble of sword-clanging and battle-play coming up from the earth.

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His Excellency

THE shrilling of trumpets between the houses of Moscow in their festal array saluted the returning czar. Before him, line after line, with faded and dusty uniforms, marched the disarmed Swedish prisoners of war. On triumphal arches of brick they saw pictures where the wrathful eagle of the East tore in pieces the Swedish lion, which was drowning or shot through with arrows. Every step brought them further into the strange barbarian city which surrounded them with its scaly ramparts. The towers were like heaven-storming mushrooms or oddly wrought celestial globes overstrewn with pointed gold stars. Tables with unfamiliar dishes and refreshments were spread in front of all the larger houses for the czar and his lords. Candles and lamps flickered before broad, black-bearded heads of Christ and unknown saints, but on both sides of the street the masses of people rushed about like water in runnels, mocking and scoffing at the vanquished. Widows, exhausted with weeping, and wives or sisters prematurely gray, who had long since been dragged off into slavery from the Swedish provinces by the Baltic, recognized from the windows their kinsmen among the prisoners. They shouted words of comfort from the Bible, but no one heard them among the cannon-shots, tocsins, and songs of victory that rolled over the city

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like the unrestrained tumult of wildfire and carnival.

First went the soldiers. There tramped the gray battalions of lean Finlanders, who so often, when a comrade beckoned them to the watch-fires, grinned in their red beards, shaking their muskets above the snow-drifts and repeating obstinately their incomprehensible "*Saisumme tesse!*"

"You Finnish bosom-brothers," said the captive women at the windows, "while your own home was in flames, you have followed our men for life and death and stood at your post like stunted little fir-bushes. If we ever again drive out to a Christmas morning service in Sweden, we shall point at the fir-bushes that stand along the road in the snow and say: 'Finlanders, Finlanders!'"

Then marched forward the officers, from the lowest to the colonels, and after them the captured cannon with their spans of horses. On a long sledge stood the kettledrums which on so many evenings in the dusk had gathered the bleeding squadrons on some field of battle. On another sledge stood the drums. How often had they not in conquered cities forced the plunderers with a sharp roulade to thrust the sword in the sheath a moment and range themselves in line behind a young and conquering king, who sat radiant on his charger with the bunch of surrendered keys still in his hand! After them came the standards and banners with

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their provincial coats of arms, but they were carried in reverse under the left arm and dragged in the mud of the street. Fur mittens and hands frozen blue were clenched over the tattered folds that still carried spots of their defenders' blood. Snowballs, stones, and sand rained over the griffins of Södermanland and East Gotland, the royal apple of Uppland, the crossed spears of Dalecarlia and Närke, over the flaming mountain of Vestmanland, the goat of Hälsingland, the leafy tree of Blekinge, and the reindeer of West Bothnia. Ever more savagely the people thrust aside the muskets of the guards and shouted: "Filth and shame on the banners of these dogs!"

Then the Russian soldiers drew their blades, and now appeared the Swedish king's led horses, improvised litter, and empty blue-covered chair. Close behind followed the generals around the bent form of Lewenhaupt, and after them came the Field Marshal. But nearest before the horse of the czar walked His Excellency Piper, he who in the zenith of greatness had stood at the side of two Swedish kings.

He seemed to hear and see nothing. He, who was called the quickest-witted head of Sweden, had to-day no answer for the guffaws and taunts that saluted him from all mouths. It looked as though he walked in thoughts of quite other affairs and other destinies.

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In the evening, when he was conducted to his quarters, and rockets pattered over the frozen river, he sat sleeping in an armchair, and never once awoke when the servants put on his nightcap and folded the coverlet around him.

Again it was morning, and again the bells played. Day followed day, and year followed year, but all were alike heavy.

The pious works of Francke and Arndt lay on his table. He induced the Field Marshal and Lewenhaupt to shake hands in reconciliation, and became a fatherly helmsman for the unfortunate people who dwelt with him in bondage. Impoverished Swedish soldiers often met him in the early hours, as he went along the streets with hurried step, followed only by a little barking dog.

Then it happened unexpectedly that he was taken away from his house, and when, after long and anxious waiting, some of his countrymen caught sight of him under the open heavens, it was far from Moscow, and he himself had become a broken old man.

It was a sunny day of spring. The rivers had already begun to burst their ice and all hearts to throb with homesickness. Petersburg had now grown up from the conquered Swedish fenland, and on the courtyard of the fortress of Peter-and-Paul stood a miserable wooden hut. In front of the cabin His Excellency Piper walked to and fro. After starving

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for seventeen days on bread and water, he was there able to get an hour's fresh air. His coat was worn and hung in deep folds. The cane trembled and tottered in the hand which aforetime had been kissed by the king and queen of Poland, and which so many times, before the name was inscribed under a commission or an ordinance, had received silver boxes or snuff-holders filled with ducats and glittering with diamonds.

At a few steps' distance stood the guards, and His Excellency could never exchange a single word with any one except Bredenberg, the battalion chaplain. He by special permission had just drawn near to the cabin. He drew forth a letter from comrades at Moscow and read it aloud to Piper:

... "The little dog which at his hurried departure His Excellency found himself obliged to leave behind has been tenderly looked after, but it has crept off with pitiful whining into all sorts of dark corners without wanting to taste either food or drink and has now died. Would to God that we prisoners might, like that unreasoning animal, lay us down in some retreat and be delivered from earthly life, but it is our fervent desire that His Excellency may now soon be ransomed or exchanged and be able to return home to his wife and children. For all he has been to us here as a fatherly guardian and Christian helper he shall ever be followed by our grateful blessings."

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Piper stood with his back to Bredenberg and gazed obstinately down at the sand. He did not brood on the severity of his guards, but his ear distinguished from afar the embittered reprimand of the king. Had not he, the Minister of State, ridden voluntarily into Poltava and laid down his sword? Did he not hear the execrations of his own people? At home in Stockholm the windows of his house were broken with stones. He saw his wife, Madame Kerstin, pick up all the jewelled rings and boxes and the many small silver ornaments in the ante-room where of old Swedes and foreigners, desirous of an audience, had stood and waited in every window-recess. He could see her in the dark of night driving away from the city on the road to Angsö. For long hours he could imagine that he himself was sitting in a Swedish pew and hearing the minister call down God's punishment on Piper who, bribed by foreigners, had misled the king, who had advised the last wars, and had built a road of men's bones over the snow-drifts of the Ukraine. His unfortunate fellow prisoners had become his only friends. Never would the land of his fathers own him; there was no land for which he might long. He alone knew the absurdity of the accusations, but he could not expose his master, could not reveal secrets of state. Broken, he stumbled to his cabin—a prisoner who was destined to die in silence under the calumnies of his countrymen and of stran-

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gers, as he had seen so many a nameless soldier fall in the ranks.

"Your Excellency," said Bredenberg, "many letters like that which I have just read get to Sweden —yea, to the king—and it is reported that he is already probably half conciliated. The czar in these days of hunger has empowered Your Excellency to request from the countess the payment of thirty thousand rix-dollars for your final ransom from captivity. Feel no regret at making the decision! If you refuse, evil tongues will say it is because of avarice. When you are at liberty, all may once more be well as in former years."

Piper answered softly:

"*From early years I would not borrow;*
I lay on Christ my weight of sorrow."

But in the same moment he turned, blood-red in the forehead, and cried in a thin voice: "What the thousand fiends and devils do you want, anyhow? I have secretly begged the countess to obtain the king's prohibition as to sending the money.—Enough of that! I have come here with my fellow countrymen, and with them I will also remain, seeing it was not granted us civilians to get a bullet."

Bredenberg smiled at the heat of the old Excellency, but bent his head and remained standing by the bench.

"They say the czar intends to conduct Your

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Excellency to hard imprisonment in Schlüsselburg, and near to seventy the body is a frail vessel. Fervently I beg you in my weakness: turn back to your home, whither all our hearts long, even though revilings bow us to the earth! Do not lay the ineradicable disgrace upon us that the man who stood nearest to two of our greatest kings should perish in hunger and rags, a banished man, unreconciled to his people!"

Piper fumbled along the wall of the hut.

"Bow thine head before the altar and not before the discarded great ones of mankind! But if you are by me at the time of dissolution, see that the remains are laid on aromatic herbs or on salt, so that they may be taken home. My days are soon told. If I have served the Swedes under two masters, I may still serve them in meekness to the last where their most unfortunate sons now are."

When Bredenberg retired, troubled in spirit, a crowd of Swedish officers in sheepskin coats and capes emerged from the nearby senate house. Before them in a brown mantle went Norberg, the chaplain of the guards, easily recognizable from his lofty stature. They were to be exchanged and sent home, and their beggarly belongings had already been piled up amid sacks of meal on a ketch by the river-bank.

Upon the wall of the fortress the clatter of chains grew silent and the Swedish workman-prisoners

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leaned out over the wheelbarrows to gaze after their departing countrymen. Soon, however, the wheels began again to creak and the mattocks to ring. Those were the petty and nameless men, the living dead, who knew nothing of their people and who were never to knock at their cottage doors, but to stand and pine, building day after day the city of strangers.

Piper slowly raised his shaking hand and pointed to the wall: "There stand my brothers," he said.

Bredenberg, who went to meet the released officers, gently twitched Norberg by the mantle, and all turned toward Piper and bared their heads. They did not go to speak with him or take along a message, but Norberg stood still, so remarkable did the scene appear to him. He felt over his heart, and when he found his prayer-book stuck between his coat and vest, he lifted it and pointed to the cross on the cover.

"O God, thy course has been so directed," he whispered, "that this man has been chosen as one of the many among the martyrs of our people! Saved, honored be his injured name!"

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The General of Papers

IT was still hardly four in the morning, but the yellow gleam on the grove of birches outside of Moscow foretold the dawn. General Lewenhaupt already sat in his accustomed place by the window, like an old owl on its branch in the woods. Two grizzled tufts of hair rose above his brow, and he meditatively opened and closed his great mournful eyes.

Roused by several scraping steps, he rose and turned toward the interior of the room. Before him stood a hunchbacked Russian Jew with drooping hair.

The Jew restlessly twined his one red lock about his finger. What legends had he not heard about old General Marchmarch, who, with a pinch of snuff on his thumb, had sent his psalm-singing soldiers against the redoubts and abattis in the wastes of Lithuania? Never previously had he stood before a hero who had commanded over armies. He thought that such a person must be a terrible man, who with an oath on his lips and hands crossed on his sword-hilt ordered in glasses and canteens and tobacco-pipes a yard long, until the smoke hovered so thick that it could be cut with a sword-blow.

"I am only a poor merchant from Tula," he stammered, "and I have come hither with a drove of oxen, but the Swedish prisoners there in the city

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have requested me to bring their prayers for an alms. Though they diligently manufacture wooden clocks and snuff-horns, there is such need among them that it cuts one's heart. But the poor men also waste much time in foolery. For whole hours every day they sit writing and scribbling. God help him who drops the smallest speck of tobacco on their paper. But it is just this that no man can comprehend: that they toil in that way when they have absolutely nothing to write about — and have scarcely a rouble in the bottom of the chest. Warriors ought not surely to sweat with the pen."

Lewenhaupt lighted a tallow candle, for it was still very dark in the room.

"Look here!" he said with kindly melancholy, throwing the light on the long, unpainted wall-shelves, where thick volumes of papers stood stuck into numbered holders.

The Jew twisted still more violently at his lock of hair, and instead of glasses and canteens he saw closely written paper wherever he turned. On chairs and table and on the very crown of the stove the paper lay. — A marvellous general this, he thought. Is that the way he looks who wins battles?

"A people," said Lewenhaupt, standing by a shelf, "a state, my friend, means order. Here all the prisoners are listed and their accounts duly entered. This is our college of finance, our fiscal

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bureau. Among the Swedish clerics on the other side of the street there is an equally long shelf. That is our church. Even in captivity we have remained a people. You, who are a Jew, you must understand that word."

He took down a volume and turned the pages, reading and ciphering half aloud. Then he went into the adjoining bedroom, and when he had set the candle on a hassock, he opened a chest and began carefully to count up the silver coins in various small leather purses. All the time he continued to talk half aloud — sometimes to himself, sometimes to the merchant.

"I have now reckoned out how much I have the right to send to Tula. But learn, my wise fellow, that ingratitude and jealousy are the only returns for effort. Jealousy, jealousy, that was the hand of darkness which divided us so that the enemy snatched the banners from our battalions. A fool he who in this sordid world cries out for friends and hearts! A comrade in arms embraces you when you rescue him from the bayonets, but he sighs because you did not at the same time fall transfixed, so that he might get your empty place. A fool he who presses toward other heights than the home of the Eternal Father! The foe have not smitten me with deeper wounds than my own countrymen have done. Yet God grant that I have served my heavenly as faithfully as I have my earthly king!"

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His Bible lay on the coverlet behind him, and the sword, which had been returned to him, hung on the bed-post. For every filled purse he wrote a line in a book and then sealed the purse. The bedroom, too, was gradually being filled with papers, but every sheet always lay beside the others in good order. So the victor of Gemauerthof sat there by the candle with the smoking sealing-wax in front of his clear, mournful eyes, and while he was continually grumbling about the bitterness of fate, the dawn came softly on.

The Jewish merchant no longer understood his speech, but twined and twisted his red lock and mumbled: "A people, a state—even in the midst of captivity.—That is a noble vision!"

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Lieutenant Pinello in the Apothecary Shop

LIEUTENANT PINELLO, the Italian, sat one winter night in the prisoners' apothecary shop in Tobolsk and drank strong waters. Behind the counter an open door led to a dimly lighted barn, where Ensign Kraemer worked as a tanner, turning over hides in a large vat.

Pinello was a good comrade, and between the two white patches in his hair he had a long sabre-scar from Poltava, where he had lain on the battle-field among the dead for two days. But as he now sat by his brandy tinctured with vermouth, he was vexed at Kraemer's obstinate diligence.

"Yes, to be sure," said he, "be a stuck-up devil! Stand all night at your tanner's vat! Don't think of coming in and drinking a glass of strong waters with an old friend! Perhaps I not do honorable service as a volunteer in the Swedish army; yes, and here in captivity even accepted their faith, which is cursed by the Pope. What do you say to that, *giovane mio?*"

"I keep still and tan ox-leather," answered Kraemer.

"Yes, you keep still and tan ox-leather, you; but I know an ox-leather that we foreigners have had to tan, and that be the Swedish spirit. Just awhile ago I take handsome Lieutenant Rothlieb up with me on the mountain and say with my hands on his

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breast: 'Rothlieb, bow your knee in this spot and thank the kind heavens that Rothlieb had been formed so comely and so fascinating before all women! Is n't he ashamed of going off and moping in the middle of the game?' Santa Maria! What do you suppose the fellow does? The big fellow begins to sigh, and I could feel how hollow the heart rattled in his breast. Then I go to Lieutenant Beck's wife. Though she is a saint and an old broom of fir-twigs where the needles prick harder the longer they stay, still in any case she be a woman. Her nose be a little freckled and her eyes two bright blue drops of water on a very cool day in the month of September. When I tella how I hear all the good God's angels sing in the sigh of the west wind on the flower-plot, she answer with call Lieutenant Rothlieb a bad man. Then she snivel and get obstinate and hoity-toity, but that most likely mean nothing else but embarrassment. When I first swore the Swedish flag faith, the trumpet blare like the Last Judgment around the table and the *fontange*, and the excuse for the wig was that it concealed. Now the oven is heated hot for the poor prisoners with the quick head who play the commedia. Ah! comrade, I have seen in my land holy sisters breathing of lovely meekness and heavenly love. They speak of God's goodness, but not of man's wickedness. Ah! comrade, come and see the women in my land, where they embrace their chil-

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dren or sit with their wax candle and weep on the graves! That is to see the heart burn. What do you say to that?"

"I keep still and tan ox-leather."

"Yes, you keep still and tan ox-leather, you, but do you know why the Swedes remain a small people, why in the midst of their victory time they have never got to ten million souls? Do you know why Sweden and the Swedish speech have never swum like seething wine over the map of Europe and made an indivisible empire? I tella why. They have no claws of fire on their fingers. The Swedish spirit was from the beginning such a hard ox-leather that it could only be trimmed with the cold hammer of duty. The Swedes from the beginning could neither conquer nor fall for love, only for duty. They do not even love one another. The Swedes would rather be hanged than give full justice to a countryman. Their spirit from the beginning be a stony ground, but we Polish and German and French and Italian renegades have watered it with our adventurers' blood where the birds now start to sing among the leaves. Drops of such adventurers' blood hang on the branches of your proudest family trees like bitter oranges on an oak — yes, the orange often sits at the very root, look you! Juice of the orange flows in the veins of your own hero-king. My beloved Swedes, hearken what I say! When you come upon our ad-

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venturers' names in your rolls, do not forget that we have mingled blood in countless perils, that we foreigners have been the gayest of soldiers,—have been the flutes where you were the drums! For love have I sworn the Swedish banner faith, and for love I faithfully keep the vow to the last breath, for—look you!—duty and love must at the end become one and the same. Give your hand, comrade, to the little Italian and all his like! What do you say to that?"

Kraemer dried his arms on his apron and stepped out into the apothecary shop.

"I am not travelled and versatile as you are, Pinello. Little I know what we were, hardly what we are. But stay with us! Come home with me, set yourself on the watch-tower at Brunkeberg and shout that all those shall gather round you who will risk their life for a deed—no matter what, no matter if it has no meaning—no matter if you have only to propose an emigration on ice but a night old over the Åland Sea. Then you will grow pale and note that you have thrown a torch. Dry fir-twigs can burn, look you! and then there is a smell as of oriental spices and incense."

His hands gripped in brother fashion those of the swarthy foreigner.

"Why then work so hard at night?" asked the Italian.

Kraemer answered: "I tan my ox-leather so that

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as soon as it gets soft and ready I may deliver it to Dame Beck and her school children. They are to sew from it breast-pieces which we may wear secretly under our coats. There 's a conspiracy on foot among the prisoners all the way to Archangel and Kasan. With weapon in hand, men, women, and children mean to go back through the whole of Russia down to the king at Bender. Such have the Swedes become now. Will you follow us, guitar-twanger?"

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The Prisoners in Tobolsk

ON one of the empty streets of Tobolsk stood an unpainted wooden house, and up in the gable room were gathered some of the Swedish prisoners of war. The table was spread with salted pike, pancakes, and gruel; and the pious Dame Beck, who had just helped Dame Morton instruct the school children in sewing, had been appointed as hostess for the evening.

Heavy steps shook the winding stairs, and the door was constantly being opened. Captain Vreech came with his prayer-books, and reserved Ensign Stjernflycht, who could never be tempted into a smile, and lively Lieutenant Kohler,—all of whom earned their scanty bread as school-teachers. Lieutenant Sprengtporten, who still bore on his wrist the scars from the chains in the tower of Kasan, talked so very loudly with handsome Lieutenant Rothlieb, the lady-killer, that Dame Beck gave them a questioning glance. Limping Captain Rubzoff, who had followed nearest the king at the Memel River, and Captain Vult, who even in captivity was as well groomed as ever, fingered and inspected the snuff-boxes, hair-bags, horse-hair wigs, and nightcaps which Cornet Ennes and his friends had made and were now displaying in a basket. Captain Stralenberg came, having just risen from the maps after he had drawn the first meridian

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over Tobolsk. Cornets Fries, Westfelt, and Toll, who had gone about and sung in the courtyards, came rattling their empty money-boxes. Major Hall, who had become a dyer, swung a cornucopia of sugar over a pancake. Major Riddarborg, who supported himself with embroidery, drew balls of silver thread from his knapsack and arranged them round a platter to make them look like pretty Easter eggs; but Lieutenant Beeth, who had become a goldsmith, laid a shining ducat on the edge of the table for exhibition—the first that any of them had seen for two whole months.

The younger men ranged themselves bashfully and stiffly round the walls with their hands behind them. Haberman, the worthy student from Viborg, who had worked as a servant and wore patched leather breeches, kept so close to the door-jamb in his embarrassment that Major Balck, who himself had but a damp brew-house for lodgings, was obliged to drag him forward to the table. Bergman, too, who had held the rank of cornet but was degraded because in the long wandering from Poltava he had threatened and cursed his own superiors, stuck by the edge of the stove with such diffidence that Dame Beck had to serve his food for him and hand him the dishes.

Vreech now clapped his hands and began to speak: "We thank thee, Heavenly Father, for Thy goodness towards us poor miserable captives, who

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may now every Sunday gather around a common table as in the old days. Next to Thee we thank the honest comrades who through the labor of their hands have brought it about that we may also sometimes feed our most needy and impoverished brothers and school children. Belau, too, our faithful doctor aforetime, who has just died in Moscow, has left us his silken dressing-gown, and it has been sold for a full seven roubles and twenty kopeks. Albeit captivity has given us a wholesome probation, we perceive every hour that Thy hand is still over us. We have recently heard that Erik Armfelt, who sat so long riveted in chains and the pillory, has now been helped to freedom; and we thank Thee that Piper, our old Excellency, has turned to a living faith and, purified from mortal weaknesses by a death of starvation, has now entered into Thy heavenly righteousness."

When Vreech was silent, Stjernflycht stepped forth and continued to speak: "Before we sit us down, we beseech Thee, O Father, for all our fellow countrymen who languish in the sulphur mines and stone-pits, and yet farther off in Tartary and in the valleys by the Chinese Wall, although they have not otherwise transgressed than that they have faithfully served their lord. Vouchsafe the cup of Thy favor to Ruhl, our comrade in arms, who for years has been lying in rags and filth in an underground vault, where he has already seen

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his friend Taube perish in misery. Grant the release of death to Hermelin, if the rumor be true that, hidden away in solitude, he is still pining in a monastery at Astrakan. Strengthen with Thy consolation Seulenberg and Hay, who sit each in his hut of earth far out in the wilderness, and Anders Oxehufvud, whom a German merchant saw going in harness before a plow. O God, our God! Doth not Jeremiah speak, and say: 'The children of Zion, they that were noble, that were valued as refined gold, they are now despised in the streets; and they that were borne upon scarlet, they embrace the dunghills. Swifter were our pursuers than the eagles of heaven. The soul of our body, the Lord's anointed, was seized in their talons; he under whose shadow we had thought to live among the peoples . . .'"

The wind shook the panes and rustled in the reeds outside the window.

"Worthy Dame Beck," whispered Stjernflycht, as he moved forward chairs for the older gentlemen, "there is only one whom I still miss. That is our charming friend Ferdinand von Kraemer, the young cornet. A purer and more dutiful heart has never beaten in a Swedish breast. When I look at him, I have to think of a cool and clear summer night."

Before Dame Beck had found an answer, Kraemer had already come in by the winding stair with his

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coat collar up, and had fixed his blue eyes upon her.

"I have some one down below with me whom you would perhaps all excuse from appearing among you," said he with lowered voice. "It is Leiyon. I'm trying to entice him away from his lounging life at the taverns. If we only accept him with a little forbearance.—There's nothing bad in him at bottom."

"His light way is so different from ours," answered Dame Beck with a hard tone of voice and a mild expression.

"You must n't be so severe, Dame Beck!"

She busied herself at the table and set out the plates. Then she went to the door and called down the stairs: "Kraemer is a righteous man, and none of us will lock out him whom he can bear with. Come up, Lieutenant Leiyon!"

Prematurely gray, with melancholy eyes and cheeks blood-red with frost and drink, Leiyon stepped across the threshold and was at once offered a chair, as if he had been one of the most distinguished of the company. At the beginning he sat perfectly still, but as the meal progressed, when the beer was poured out and no one remembered that he was there, he quite suddenly seized Dame Beck's reluctant hands, kissed them, and told with what unfeigned regard he loved her. He passed from chair to chair with his glass, embracing and

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pressing the hands of both known and unknown. Finally he went to the younger men, who were still standing along the wall, and prayed them to call him "thou," and when he came back to his place beside Kraemer, his glass was empty. Then he threw his arm about Kraemer's waist and tossed back his gray lion's mane from his brow.

After that he beat on the table with his free hand so that it rang: "What 's become of the Swedish courage, my lads? I 'm not asking for your Jesus. —If Leiyon is to amuse you, pass along a decent stirrup-cup! What do you say? Kraemer's honesty! I grant it, I grant it. But have you ever heard any one tell of Kraemer's cleverness? 'A man has his duty,' he says. Not to laugh in misfortune— or to do away with himself. Just to sit and wear out his breeches for five stivers a week. No, but do you know what? I 'm thinking of doing like Stjernkors. I 'm thinking of becoming Russian, swearing to the Russian faith, and amiably marrying a Russian woman. Just tell me this, my fine, good Madam Beck, just tell me this: Why should life be worse here than back at home? Is the grass there greener or the straw softer?"

"My dear friend and comrade," answered Kraemer mildly: "at bottom you 've a good, childlike heart, and I 'm very fond of you. But homesickness is the heaviest sickness of all, and my opinion only is that if we know we 're doing our duty, then

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we poor exiles have still something in this world to rejoice at."

The yellow hair was brushed smoothly back from his clear brow.

Leiyon nodded toward him: "Rejoice—I really think we may. Do you know why even the Russian is fond of us Swedes? You there, it's not only on account of our polite manners and because we teach his children to read and write. Can you remember, on the examination day I went to the school and described for the children Krokedummelum, the capital of Mesopotamia, where there was n't a single sleeping-hall but only taverns and hostelries, and where the wagons don't run on wheels but on beer-barrels and kegs? And the dragoons and Russian fur-dealers who sat on the benches among the children to look on submissively and get to learn something useful laughed so that Mistress Beck chased me out.—The deuce! Therefore, look you, the Russians and the whole world like us, because we here in the midst of our misery can take both them and all Siberia to our bosom and can be so merry that there is a radiance around us."

Kraemer looked him intently in the eyes. "Ah, you old brother and hero of the beer-mug, I perceive strange emotions hidden under the gaiety of the Swedes."

But on towards evening Leiyon began to curse

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and thunder as if he had been the very field marshal, and Dame Beck's ice-cold hands quietly took the beer-mug from his.

"I keep no drinking-house," she said harshly; "and we have not come together to live in surfeiting and sin."

Kraemer immediately interrupted her, so that Leiyon might not catch the severe words, and managed to get the latter down with him from the room.

"I 'm going to the churchyard," shouted Leiyon. "Alongside it is the best tavern. Prosperity and gaiety give health and long life."

"You can look down from here at the churchyard by the frozen river yourself. There is n't a single house near it."

"I 'm going down to see if the grass we sowed over Raaf's little son has taken root."

Kraemer shook his head and took him under the arm. A biting norther whistled from the desolate marsh-land, and no wanderer was visible. The snow had whirled away from the road, and the two friends went on in silence. While still at a distance, they read in the twilight the white Swedish inscription on the wooden cross.

"Stop and read it aloud, Brother Kraemer! One of my kinsmen is said to be lying in the Ukraine and one at Bender. For fifteen years we have strewn Swedish bones from the White Sea to the Archipelago."

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Kraemer plucked at his coat. "Come along, I tell you! This is nonsense."

"The grass has been frozen off.—Tell me, tell me, are n't the dead at home? Are n't they at home who lie already in the earth? Talk with me, Kraemer. You can calm the sea, you carry such a repose with you."

"Be still, be still, and let me alone! I won't listen to you. Don't brood on such things, but let us instead bethink us of our duties!"

"But, I ask you, shan't we even be at home when we dead sleep in God's bosom? Home, home—do you understand that word?—home! Shall we never, never come home?"

"You don't know to whom you're talking, Leiyon. I am weaker than you."

"Home—is n't it true that you, too, have brooded on that word? You have gone off and repeated it quietly to yourself—home, home! It begins when a child counts the nails and knots on the floor. A home, look you, is something that begins as a little seed and ends as a great tree. It begins with the children's room, then grows until it becomes many rooms and a whole house, a whole district, a whole country; and outside of that land the very air and water lose their refreshing taste. Can you not assure me that our comrades who lie here beneath us in the stony and alien earth are at home?"

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Kraemer pulled yet more violently at his garments.

"Haha! Now I've just caught you finely in a trap! But I myself.—Do you believe a jolly fellow goes off and sorrows in earnest? Then you don't know my beggar song that I've just composed to sing in the courtyards, when I'm sometimes in need of a farthing."

He walked more and more slowly off on the driveway along the river, and Kraemer, who remained standing by the churchyard fence, heard him strike up his beggar chant:

Near Uppsala lying,
A cottage gleams whitely,
Where daily and nightly
The maples are sighing.
So fast the days darted:
But years have gone by now.
A captive am I now,
Who thence am departed.

The song sounded ever more distant in the storm.

My voice is but broken,
My tongue is unhandy.
I sing when I soak in
A throat-ful of brandy.
Then let there be brought seven
Glasses, red one of them!
For my lion I've fought seven

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Years and am done with them.
Twelve times I was wounded.
I smiled, never swerving,
When icy winds hounded.
Since birth I 've been starving.
My sword was the omen
Of death to twelve foemen.
But my sword 's far away, sir,
Hilt-deep in the sand
Of the Dnieper's lone strand.
Twelve coins, then, I pray, sir,
Slip into my hand,—
Best wage of your labors
And spoil of your quarrels
Each day with your neighbors.—
Hurrah for King Charles!

The voice died away, and Kraemer turned back alone to his meagre but well-tended room, where hardly a speck of dust could be found on the table. He undressed and went to bed, but could not sleep. Time and again he jumped up and listened. That 's only the wind, he thought, and drew the coverlet up to his forehead; but after a while he again sat up, awake, in his bed. It sounded as if some one had thrown sand against the window-panes.

He put out the tallow candle, which was still burning, and went in his night-shirt to the window. When he had opened it, he saw on the street below a little man, who beckoned to him incessantly.

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He recognized by the sheepskin pelisse and half-boots that it was a Russian peasant.

"Little father," said the peasant, "I have often met you in company with the merry Swedish Lieutenant Leiyon. Never has that man caused me anything but joy. It 's been a long time now that he has lived with my wife and me. Though he never paid for himself, we were heartily fond of him, and of evenings he told stories of how he and the Swedish king in the woods of Poland tore apart the jaws of leopards and heleophants and other animal scourges that had come up from hell. — To be sure he would sometimes sit in the cellar doorway and be silent, but if then he got only a glass or two, he became again directly the same kindly fun-maker."

"Ah, the Swedes!" muttered Kraemer. "Haven't I always said: I perceive strange emotions hidden under their gaiety?"

"Little father, when the lieutenant did not come to us this evening, I went to the barn where he slept. — And there he was lying, too. He had made away with himself. His great cheerfulness, no doubt, became at last too much to keep up."

The night was windy and dark. The following morning the prisoners wrote in their diaries of Leiyon's death. Next to that fact they made the entry that during the darkness Kraemer had left his quarters. No one heard anything of him afterwards,

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and no one found his remains, but the officers said to the soldiers: "He has got safe home to his people."

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The Lion's Cage

NUM EDDAULA was the chief of the Truth-tellers' Brotherhood. They lived each of them by himself in their homes as merchants or expounders of the most ancient writings, but every year at the first new moon after the festival of Beiram they assembled at night by torchlight in white robes in a remote gorge.

One night when Num Eddaula was returning from such a meeting along the stony mountain path, he said to the servant who bore the torch: "We have just sworn our brotherhood vow always to tell the truth except in one thing; namely, when it concerns our own good deeds. These we are to suppress or prevaricate away, and we must aspire to die forgotten. What better mirrors the silent greatness of eternity than oblivion? On all the earth there is no lodging so fair as a forgotten grave. The grasses there sigh differently. The birds twitter differently. Hearken to me, my friend! The Truth-tellers' freedom of speech has so angered the sultan that he has sworn to extirpate them with the sword, if in recompense he does not receive my head. That is easy to recognize from the birth-mark beside the eye. I myself will be the man to bear him the head. That, however, is a good action, but will no longer remain good if it attracts renown, and I have neither the desire nor the right

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to reveal it. If our band suspected my intention, they would bind me and conceal and protect me to the uttermost. Therefore you are to follow me secretly, and when I have suffered my punishment, you are to bury me in silence in an unknown place and afterwards give out that I was seized against my will as a cowardly fugitive."

When the dawn appeared, the servant cast away the torch, and they descended to the blossoming plain by the castle of Timurtash, where the sultan had his pleasure-camp.

Num Eddaula was confused when he saw the splendid equipments and pavilions. He listened eagerly to a slave who related that the Swedish king lived at the castle with his needy court, half as prisoner, half as guest of honor.

"Let us go up thither," he said to his servant, "because I myself am a weak man, and the sight of a hero will lend me strength. Mine eyes, weary with age, will then close with joy."

They went through the garden, where the summer sun shone between the fig-trees and the mulberries. Along the path Brandklipparen was led to water. When they came to the steps of the castle, they encountered among the Turks who had just had a glance at the king the sultan himself, disguised as a Janisary. Num Eddaula squeezed himself against the wall and drew his loosened hair over the birth-mark beside his eye, but he felt on

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his wrist the breath of the mouth which that evening was to command his death. A hero, he wanted to see a hero before him, or else even he would begin to waver.

A door was opened. Taking a few vehement steps forward, he bent and through a hole in a screen surveyed the king.

The wide apartment, where the sultan's dancers often trod the carpets as they performed to the music of flutes, was from floor to ceiling and along the walls and windows so overspun with many-colored arabesques that Num Eddaula thought he was beholding a hall of leaves, where enchanted spiders had fastened their golden webs among the flowers and vines. By the farthest wall the king lay on a small field-bed, with his shirt buttoned up to his throat. Overmastered, without soldiers, without power, and yet sovereign lord over a remote kingdom, he never had money enough for the bribes and gifts which were necessary for an audience with the sultan. He could not humiliate himself before the foreign ambassadors and approach the sultan as a beaten and destitute fugitive. He blushed at the thought of having to show himself before his lackeys and grooms as a disarmed prisoner who had to fit himself to another's will, howsoever eagerly they kept repeating that it befell by his own gracious command. Instead, therefore, he had laid himself on his bed; what had attacked him was not a

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matter of health but of money. Ever since the affair at Bender he had remained lying month after month. He would not once set his foot on the ground, but had himself carried in a sheet to a divan when his bed was to be made. His two body physicians, Skraggenstjerne and Neuman, noted with anxiety that his limbs were beginning to stiffen and become paralyzed, as with a fakir who for the glory of God has long endured in the same attitude on a heap of rubbish. Vainly they begged him to raise himself at least once every day and take a few steps on the carpet.

So Num Eddaula thought he was beholding one of those holy men who are wont to be reverently saluted beneath a leafy oak or on the sunny side of some distant mausoleum.

Coughing, the consumptive scholar, Eneman, had just been telling of his long journey. He shook a couple of young crocodiles from two flasks that he had with him and showed how they spat out green and black poison, as they were burnt alive in a heap of embers on a brazier by the bed. The king propped his arms on the pillows and looked down at the creatures that were twisting in the embers.

"Could a man fell a grown crocodile with only a sword?" he asked. "A man *can* do what he will."

The threadbare chancellor, Von Müller, who had by now begun to serve as head cook, since there

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was nothing else left, stroked his faded coat tail with a simper.

"Can one, when one will, fry pancakes without eggs and cream?"

"A man can get what is requisite—in necessity with his blade."

Grothusen lifted his dark nostrils into the air and drummed on his braided court-hat, while he addressed himself to Müller in a low voice: "In the very worst case a man can get what he needs at forty per cent."

"The noble pashas look so cheerful. Of what are they speaking?" asked Num Eddaula of the nearest lackey, but the latter became very much confused and answered conciliatingly at random: "They are talking about one of the most beautiful passages of the evangelists."

Therewith he accidentally gave the screen a push on the slippery floor. When the king caught sight of the venerable old man, he beckoned him nearer and commanded Grothusen to act as interpreter.

The king said: "Assuredly you are a wise man. Should you also have courage to stand where bullets are whistling?"

Num Eddaula lowered his turban, and reflectively stroked the white beard which reached to his waist. "I belong to the Truth-tellers' Brotherhood and may not attribute to myself any virtue. But do you that are a hero answer me this: If your first

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teacher said to you, 'Do not kill, do not kill even on a heap of embers the ugliest and fiercest of animals'—if the noble pashas around you and all men should say every morning, 'Do not kill, for that is a sin. Stay at home in your kingdom and watch over the harvests, although you win no fame therewith'—should you have courage for that? Have you courage in misfortune to humble yourself and admit yourself conquered and to forgive your enemies and tormentors?"

The king knitted his brows: "Should not a good soldier rather show himself staunch?"

"You that hate lying and never wished that others should pretend you to be more perfect than you are, high is your forehead and noble, large are your eyes, but you have an evil line at your tightly pressed mouth. People think that it smiles, but it does not smile. It is something quite other that the lips indicate. They tempt God. They say that your will is His. You gathered your people, and they were smitten. When God has smitten a people, He rolls a heavy boulder upon the grave and ordains quietness. He desires to see once more yellow fields and playing children. But you continue the strife, and against Him. The testifiers of truth—all the steadfast ones who in prosperity are humble, in misfortune are proud—these have roused themselves from their thoughts to see you; and now they turn away. It may be that your land has brought forth

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many great men and kings, but could any of them from the beginning stand forth better fitted for a warrior of light than you? You feared oblivion. A star was to have been kindled on your grave to burn for thousands of years. But fate was against you, because God willed to smite you and your people. Fulfil, then, your hero's task! Put away vain reputation, as you have despised the wine-cup and women. Do it humbly or do it proudly, whichever you can. Go forth and set yourself in the place of the conquered and the destitute. Go forth and set yourself, like Job, upon a heap of ashes. You can control your countenance; control yourself likewise. You are capable of more than you perform. That is what God never forgives in a hero. Never did He raise on His right hand a more transparent pure jewel than you, and never did He in His wrath fling His own handiwork so deep in the darkness—and therefore I love you, because you are human. Of all the men I have met, none have I loved as you, no one. Beware, beware! for there are others, too, that love you and are far more dangerous than your worst enemies and traducers."

"And who are they?"

"The fools. They have observed the line at your mouth, and interpret it in their own speech. Fools never turn away; they fasten themselves to the garments. Fools demand a hero-fool, a laurelled arch-fool for all time, and for that office they wish to

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acclaim you with jubilation. The fools inquire not greatly of what nature you are. They love not men. They are like the little monkeys that sit huddled up on the stone images in the palm grove of Hedjaz and eat dates in the sun, but that leap from bough to bough, chattering and pursuing, when they hear a man's step. O king, death you fear not. God will give it you in compassion at the time when He remembers how your boyish hand wielded the sword of the cherubim. More heavily will fall His revenge. He gives you to the fools."

"You go far in outspokenness."

"I would but search how far your courage extends, inasmuch as you are a hero. Have you courage to die forgotten?"

The king's forehead became still more clouded, and he felt about for an answer. He sat sidewise in his bed with the cover twisted around his knees and feet.

Num Eddaula crossed his hands over his breast, and bowed: "There is much, then, for which your courage is too small."

Grothusen struck his hat against the brazier. "You that are a speaker of truth—who can say that you do not stand here and plume yourself on your humility? Who can say that it does not need courage to wish to die remembered?"

Num Eddaula closed his eyes, and with his lean fingers felt uneasily about him in the air. "There

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you spoke truth, pasha. Fame is unclean slander, unclean honor. It is an error and a delusion. The arrogant man is called meek, the meek arrogant. Among the world's famous men and women since Adam, how much of clear gold would survive if the misleading ashes could be sifted away? And you, O king—who read your last thought in the evening when you fell asleep? who saw you in the solitude, in the darkness as you lay there awake? who beside your bier could lay hand on heart and say: 'Such he was'?—Only the fools shall dare to do that and to say: 'Ask us, he was as we.' When they weary of praising, they begin to throw stones, to bemock you and point the finger at your heavy broadsword. Your unrestful grave will be their favorite place of resort. They will stand there packed so tight that the clever folk can never come near your mouldering bones. But this I say to you. Though the fools acclaim you as theirs, if you can but rouse yourself and gather about you the wise, the truthful, and the steadfast—those who in prosperity are humble, in misfortune are proud—then you have stood the test. Then have you become a champion of God even when you are but as a memory and a shadow. Then have men weighed you with false weights. Then are you he whom I will that you should be."

Num Eddaula cast himself upon his knees with his head upon the matting: "I am a weak man who have gotten strength from seeing you. Much have

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I transgressed in my life, in many things have I fallen short. If I have not scars on my head, I have them in my soul. I want to be forgotten, forgotten. I would sleep, would sleep. The famous man becomes a slave amid his fellows. According as he suits his last master, he will either get a garland woven into his hair or will have to endure buffet and blow. No love has power to proclaim peace over his dust. There, ever higher, is growing a tree with wondrously gnarled branches and with unstinted restlessness and sighing in its leaves."

No one answered him. All was still throughout the spacious apartment. Finally there was a bang and clatter on the brazier, and the king held out a shining doubloon to the white-bearded soothsayer. He crept forward on his knees to the bed, and pressed his face to the sheet that hung down from it, but he thrust the coin from him. "You may live, you may die," he said; "there will always be strife around you. I go to rest."

Early next morning Num Eddaula was executed before the tent of the sultan. The confident certainty of oblivion spread its tranquillity over his last hour.

The servant buried his body apart between two cypresses. When the grave was shovelled in again, he strewed over it grains of maize for the doves, which gathered in hundreds from grove and tree. Soon bushes with white flowers sprang up from the

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earth. Tired soldiers and herdsmen found there a shady spot and often lay down to rest awhile on the grass. It was a sacred place. There slept a forgotten man.

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The King's Ride

ROYAL CHANCELLOR VON MÜLLER sat on a wooden stool before the fireplace of his room in the house of the Swedish king at Demotika and made pancakes. He raised one of the nap-worn tails of his coat to the fireplace and examined it.

"The braid is still holding on to the riding-coat," he remarked to Colonel Grothusen, who stood near him to warm himself, "but it 's disgracefully blackened. And the rest of the Swedish retinue are beginning — devil take them! — to look like a very pack of gipsies. I can say with Fabrice: 'I shall soon not remember how money-pieces look, whether they are round or square.'"

"They are so round that they roll away like wheels," responded Grothusen, rubbing his hands in high spirits. "A king, a court, a whole small army without anything but a little borrowed small-change in their pockets — and that in a Turkish market-town hundreds of miles from their native land! When did you ever see the like? God forgive me, but is n't it as funny a sight as can be, even if the sugar is sometimes too thin on the pancakes? We don't get a single purse from the Porte any more. Though I 've scarcely time to sleep at night, but am busy only with negotiating for travel-money from all the usurers of the world, yet I hardly comprehend how we can get decently away from

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here. I have told His Majesty that we shall have to take a whole train of creditors with us as a rear-guard and quarter them at Karlshamn till they are paid. Imagine little Karlshamn filled full of Turks, who fall on their knees at the street corners and call upon Allah!—Whew!—If we can only get off! We must march away with drums and trumpets, as befits the Swedes, you understand. Luckily we have some finery left from the summer when I went on the embassy to the great monarch. In point of fact, there is neither padding nor lining in the saddle-cloths, but outside there is that much more of gilt thread and tassels—which is the main thing. And I myself look like a full Excellency. What more does one want? Lace ruffles, snuff-spoon of pure ducat gold; in the wardrobe a court pelisse given by the sultan, a pair of slippers down at heel, a nightcap, and a silken dressing-gown which Düben would be proud to wear even at High Service. But that is the last, too, and let 's see what will be left of all the blessed stuff before we get home!"

The longer Grothusen talked, the merrier he grew. Finally he went to the window, and opened it wide.

"What 's there?" inquired Müller, buttoning up his coat against the cold.

"It 's a crowd of Turks that are standing about waiting to get sight of His Majesty riding off.

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There is a heavy rain, you see, and for that reason they know that he won't stay indoors."

Grothusen dug and searched in the skirt of his coat, and when he had found two or three large silver coins, he threw them out of the window and cried: "That's how money looks. Long live the Swedes and their great, mighty, bounteous king!"

"Is that your own money or the king's?"

"As if I knew!"

"Did n't you use to have your own money in your left coat tail and the king's in the right?"

"But the left coat tail has graciously consented to take a compulsory loan for necessities from the right. My dear fellow, I render an honest reckoning. That is, every evening I count up how much there is left in the total."

There was a murmur of applause from the crowd, but Müller lifted the griddle from the fire with a surly grumble.

"You keep your light heart, brother. I never believed, though, that you would become so important that you 'd get a freiherr and Royal Chancellor for your cook; but I 'm glad my pancakes please the gentlemen's taste. I 've often asked myself how we down here have been able to keep on all these years so willingly and joyfully."

"That I 'll explain to you. There is such a rare fascination for men in being daily and hourly with him who has command over their weal and woe,

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that one may inquire whether perhaps the bliss of heaven, too, may not turn out to consist in the same thing."

"That would be well, if such a diversion also made men nobler and better."

"Thank you, brother. That remark was for me. I know well enough that behind my back I am little spared here among you all. Call me a frivolous beggar, a—well, what you please! A skeptic, and philosopher such as I, who oversleeps himself badly at morning service, cannot expect much love among you Swedes. I may console myself, though, with the fact that the king himself is less dainty in such things than you. At home it 's likely to be a question of falling on the battlefield, and then you shall see, brother, that the black wig of old Grothusen will not stand behind the line."

"At home, you say. Answer me honestly. Does His Majesty really hope to gather fresh troops there?"

"That he does—and he'll get them, too. That will make an affair in the realm such as the world never saw the like of. I 've nothing against that. In the hour of need to call the money-lenders 'my dear fellow,' that 's one thing—and it might happen that chevaliers would become scarce, if no money-lenders could be found. But one's honor and sword, that 's another matter."

"And is he, then, for that reason, going to de-

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camp at last? I thought I noticed that he was not quite clear as to the immediate future."

"The further he gets toward the north, the more clearly he comes to see it."

"You think of the ancient enemies waiting for him: Saxony, Russia, Poland, Prussia, Hanover, Denmark—six hostile peoples to fight!"

"Seven. You are forgetting the latest and most dangerous enemies."

"Whom?"

"The Swedes."

Müller arose from the stool, and the two one-eyed men stood face to face.

"God in heaven! don't talk like that. You used at other times to be of those who do not despair. This is a strange speech in your mouth."

"Since His Majesty has got certain knowledge that his subjects have begun to challenge and defy him, he has come to the point of riding home with the same fury as to a battle. What, besides, is one to believe after the latest news? The country is without government. The civil service is standing as still as a mill-wheel on a dried-up brook. The lords of the Riksdag and the Council talk of dethronement. We should get to see a flaming outbreak, if the Swedes were not such a law-abiding people—and it still happens that *he* is their prince. Don't wail and lament, my dear Müller, for all this is just your own old song—and don't be so dam-

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nably stingy with the sugar, but turn the whole cornucopia over the pancakes — and hold your head high! Adieu!"

Müller stood in the middle of the room, flustered and without an answer. The greatest astonishment was depicted on his face, for through the door he heard Grothusen call to a drummer-boy: "August, fetch a decent drum here! Hang it in front of you and come with me to the bazaar."

Müller shook his head, and sat down again by his pancakes. "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, what sort of absurdities will Grothusen commit with the drum?"

. . . . . .

Next morning the Swedes marched out ceremoniously from Demotika, in order to begin at last their homeward journey to the shore of the Baltic. They had to struggle on for hundreds of miles through mountain passes and forests. In a long line behind them rode Turks, Jews, and Armenians with their sacks and bundles. These were their seventy-two most pressing creditors. The king was cheerful and brilliant, so that the citizens and their veiled women called down the blessing of God over the departing hero. Only Grothusen remained behind, for his Turkish friends held him back at the door. One of them stuck an ink-horn into his hand, another put a pipe of tobacco into his mouth, and

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the black attendants pulled at his coat. His large nostrils were raised aloft, and he emptied his coat pockets into the hands of the attendants with a magnificent flourish. He then opened the lid of his clothes-chest.

"My dearest, dearest friend," said he. "This exquisite nightcap I've had specially made for you, and have used it myself so that it should be a real memorial.—And you, father! These brand-new slippers—you wonder they are so down at heel. I myself have diligently walked in them so as to ascertain that they would not be too hard on your feet.—And you there, pray take this silken dressing-gown!"

He jumped up on his equipage like a fugitive, and ordered the coachman to drive on.

That evening, when the Swedes came to Timurtash, a pasha presented to the king as a gift from the sultan a silken tent and a sabre with a jewelled hilt.

"There goes my pelisse of sable," said Grothusen to the king half aloud. "No other return-gift can be raised, and Your Majesty yourself has absolutely nothing but a dusty coat and a half-dozen rough soldier's shirts."

"Lend me as well the ink-horn and pipe that you just got," returned the king with a roguish twinkle in his eye. "I must also present something to the chieftain for the escort of the Janisaries."

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"Give the whole old fellow Grothusen for a eunuch in the great monarch's seraglio!" cried Grothusen jubilantly, rubbing his hands together and becoming more light-headed, the madder the jest became. At that moment he caught sight of his drummer-boy, who was marching despondently along the road with the drumsticks under his arm.

"Your drum has no tongue in her head. There's stolen goods in her," cried the boy's comrades mockingly.

When they examined the drum, they found that it was sealed with four seals; and big tears came to the boy's eyes.

"Strike bravely on your discordant drum!" ordered Grothusen. "It was I that sealed it, as Pilate the grave of Christ—and a little mournful music may come in well for all the Turkish creditors behind us, who are now riding into exile in our stead."

But in the evenings, when the Swedes rested a few short hours by the camp-fire, the musicians rapped and shook the drum, opining that it was full of money and securities embezzled from the king.

"He's a keen one!" they whispered. "It's no trick, is it, to empty the left pocket liberally, when one sticks such long fingers into the right?"

As early as two o'clock at nights the king had the trumpets blow for breaking camp. He galloped

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forward between the cliff-walls by torchlight. When at Pitest he found himself once more on the boundary of Christendom, the companies left behind at Bender met him, and the last Zaporogeans, who had remained faithful in so many perils, received, kneeling, his words of farewell. Afterwards he went to Grothusen.

The latter had just halted to count the guldens that one of the guardsmen had gone ahead and dickered for in Transylvania.

The king said to him: "My passport is now ready. I am to be known as Captain Frisk, and shall ride at a gallop to Stralsund with Rosen and Düring."

Grothusen then lifted off his braided hat and his wig and delivered them to the king.

"The slippers, nightcap, gorgeous pelisse, silken dressing-gown — Seek them, seek them! All gone! Now the wig and hat go. With this disguise and a snuff-brown frock coat, Your Majesty is so unrecognizable and transmogrified, that if all the Rosen family had not a knack with women, no tavern girl — saving your honor — would ever proffer the gentlemen a glass of water. But for my part I'm thankful that there's no need to offer my flesh for the king's ride across Europe."

Grothusen himself, however, took his place at once in the travelling-carriage, so as to arrive first and be able to meet his lord at the Swedish sea,

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along whose coast the enemy were now building their fortresses and cities.

Day and night the king exercised in wild rides his two chosen companions and the two dragoons who were to follow after him at a day's interval. When at last the hour struck in which he was to assume his disguise and spring into the saddle, he gave his gelding the spurs with such violence that Düring and Rosen were almost at once a couple of horse's lengths behind. He looked as on the morning before a battle. He, who in fresh and sound health had endured months in a sick-bed so as to avoid a humiliating audience with the sultan, and who for years had trifled away the days in a small Turkish town in the hope of being able to gather a great army to follow him, now rode off impatiently with his two comrades and without a single servant.

The hoofs rang on the stones like those of a runaway steed, and the dazed vine-dresser sprang to the door of his hut.

"Who 's riding there in such an alarm?" he asked. "If it 's a poor hunted deserter, he may step in under my roof, and my wife and I will hide him and let him bed on the straw."

"Look out for the chevalier's sword, father!" answered Düring. "It is loose in its sheath to-day. He is an officer, who has been challenged by an unfaithful friend and relative, and who is on fire to

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meet him." But to himself he whispered: "That relative is the Swedish people. So that is to be our last fight!"

Meantime, with the sealed drum on the driver's box among baskets and canteens, Grothusen jolted toward Stralsund. His heart thumped like a youth's when for the first time he read the name of the city on a leaning sign-post. Soon he heard the hour strike in the church of St. Nicholas. He distinguished the solitary lights in the houses of wakeful and sick folks, and on the drawbridge he sprang from the wagon and shouted to the guard: "The king, the king! Where is he? What news?"

The watch knew nothing, and every morning Grothusen gazed from the wall in search of his home-coming lord. With the brightest moonlight on his face, however, the king arrived at Düker's house one night, and early next morning, after the boots had been cut from his swollen feet, into his room came Grothusen with the glad salutation: "Your Majesty, I 'm in love."

The king took him cordially by the hand. "Dearest Grothusen, we're likely to get other things to attend to than serenading demoiselles."

"But this is no demoiselle. She is assuredly both mother and grandmother. Further than that I know nothing about her. But now as before I beg most

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humbly that in all my fooleries I may retain Your Majesty as my secret confidant."

Grothusen laid his papers before the king, and sometimes pointed to a column of figures, but to make the work easy and merry he meanwhile told the story of his adventure.

"It was one noon just when I was to betake myself here to Düker. By the Kniper Gate, bathed in sunlight, stood a house that was so white it pricked me in the eye and forced me to glance up. There she sat at the window,—No, now Your Majesty is at the wrong column of figures. The two thousand guldens that are wanting here I have caroused away on my own account.—Yes, there she sat at the window under a curtain with white fringe. Her hair, too, was altogether white, but handsomely arranged, and her face was narrow and irradiated with an immeasurable mildness. She is certainly over seventy, but she 's still a woman, just the same. There is nothing so refined and noble, my most gracious lord, as to adore an old lady. One does not long to draw near her. She stands up at the window like a memory, like a sacred legend. One only salutes her reverently with one's sword, as one goes past with one's troops."

"It is pleasant to hear you again, little Grothusen. My old passion for lively and crack-brained folk seems to increase with years. This Holsteiner Görtz, who is to come here soon, is said also to be a mightily

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agreeable and well-spoken gentleman, with great gifts of spirit."

"I myself have always recommended his services to Your Majesty, though I know that with his coming even I and Feif will have to crawl down nicely into the shade. Farewell, farewell! Such a little bungler in finance as I am avails no longer in these hard days when the whole realm is at stake. Here there is need of a great diabolical minister of the foreign kind. Görtz is bold and resourceful, a warrior in statecraft, and he got money for the administrator of Holstein like grass. He is more cunning than ten little Grothusens and fifty Müllers and Feifs. But what addles my wits is the question of how one should compose a *billet-doux* to such an elderly dame as my fair one at the Kniper Gate."

The king again got the look of mischief in his eye and handed Grothusen a pen.

"Stand there at the end of the table and write, and I 'll dictate."

The king pondered awhile, and then began:

NOBLEST LADY—A powder-stained warrior fellow, such as I, assuredly dares not beg for an audience with such a noble lady as Madame, yet still the noble lady might graciously send her likeness; but it must be done quickly, for my king says that soon we shall all go forth to fall, so that a hasty answer with the likeness—

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Grothusen laughed and wrote and laughed, talking in between of accounts and state affairs and Görtz. When the *billet* was done, he folded it, kissed the hand of his royal friend, and not long after went down the street toward the Kniper Gate.

Then it happened at last one day that Müller, who after a long delay had also arrived at Stralsund, was sitting at work with Grothusen in the king's ante-room.

A lackey opened the door and announced: "The Herr Baron Georg Heinrich von Görtz!"

One-eyed, in chevalier style, with a mother-of-pearl hilt to his court sword and his orders on a costly suit of velvet, Görtz stepped across the threshold. He took the hands of Grothusen and the confused Müller and laid them on his breast. After that fashion the three one-eyed gentlemen came to be standing before one another.

"Tell me frankly," said Görtz, pointing with his head toward the closed door of the king, "how long has it actually been since our hero has had a bath?"

Grothusen answered: "Let me see! He had his last bath last summer in Demotika. But he sometimes has a douche of cold water. About such things Your Excellency may easily joke with him. But one thing I would advise. Don't talk unnecessarily about the Swedes!"

Görtz shut his eye, nodded, and went inside to the king.

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A slight shadow passed across the tanned forehead of Grothusen, and he muttered to Müller: "While His Majesty is signing himself over to the devil, I think I 'll go down to the market-place and drive away my thoughts."

When Görtz had saluted the king, he came forward to him with polite negligence and without a single flattering word.

"It 's remarkable," he observed, "that if you drop a coin in a big hall, it rolls over the whole floor till it hides itself under a cabinet."

The king, who was still half suspicious toward this foreign wooer of fortune, thereupon took a ducat from his purse, which happened to be lying open above the documents on the table, and threw the coin on the floor. It rolled in a circle and remained lying in the middle of the room in front of him.

"*Sapristi!*" said Görtz. "*Sapristi!* If one *wants* the coin to go under the wardrobe, it lays itself down in the middle of the floor."

At the same moment the king accidentally happened to strike his sword-hilt against the purse so that all the ducats tumbled ringing to the floor. Like a herd of frightened sheep they rushed with their rounded backs in all directions and hid themselves under the cabinet, the table, and finally even behind the stove.

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Now for the first time Görtz began to bow deeply and still more deeply.

"Behold! I am weak in matters of faith, that I freely confess; but still I am superstitious in one particular. A bomb may fall in the midst of a tightly packed battalion without wounding a single man, but it has never yet happened in the world that a piece of bread and butter has fallen to the ground without lying butter-side down in the dust. There is in the air a race of small imps directed by the Evil One himself. If they were not invisible, they would appear like small brownish bees flying about. They for their part never cause any evil on a large scale, but only small vexations; yet when the vexations are many, the affair may end with a great misfortune. It is the invisible imps that are vexed and enticed by the shining Swedish weapons. If a flag be hoisted now, the cord breaks. If a soldier goes over a frozen ditch, the ice cracks. To put it more simply, Your Majesty is now pursued as assiduously by bad luck as formerly by good."

The king hummed softly:

Well, what can one do
To plant a firm shoe
On the mischievous crew?

"He who will may be the architect of his own fortune. One scares them away. To begin with, one dismisses from one's neighborhood all petty people,

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for such folk have as many invisible imps on them as a baggage-horse has fleas. Then one draws one's blade against all the world and follows the star of one's will."

"The Swedish lords declare that at home there soon will not be a single farthing to collect."

"Then one must coin new farthings. What is money? Bonds secured by existent values. Has not that bit of a kingdom that lies up there a value, against which one should be able to write as many bills of indebtedness as one chooses?"

"I have myself been long thinking of fiat money. But would that be right? A sovereign should be just. There must not be a stain on his honor. Remember that!"

"Assuredly, assuredly! Fiat money, you see, is a loan. In years of hardship one brings the genuine money to oneself with it. In years of victory one releases the genuine and throws the fiat coinage into the furnace. He who would aim high must not fear to let even Lucifer forge the arrow."

The king's bold thoughts burst out at once in questions as into a hand-to-hand fight with artless prejudices. He himself had never in the wilderness put his hand into his pocket without being able to fill it with ducats. More indifferent than a beggar as to his coat and his lodgings, he still had never seen an object that he really longed to buy. His ducats had never been used for anything else

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than to encourage and reward others. Money was for him public funds. On the contrary, he observed daily that as soon as he ordered others to hand over their pelf to the army, they began to grumble and seek evasions. His contempt for these servants entwined itself serpent-like with his indomitable desire for redress, for revenge on the foes that had cast him down into such an abyss before the eyes of the world. Was not he a king, a lord over millions of men? Why, then, was he constantly trammelled and hindered by these small metal discs, in themselves worthless, which in one place were called rix-dollars and in another guldens? Money was an invention by which the base turned human worth topsy-turvy and betrayed honesty so as to live sumptuously themselves. Was it really a sin to change around some of the screws in such an invention? By rights money ought to be wholly done away with.

After meditating awhile, the king said: "And your conditions?"

"That I remain a subject of Holstein but free to choose my assistants and responsible only to Your Majesty. The civil service shall be remodelled for the greater advantage of the royal power. The army—"

The king straightway interrupted him: "But not a foot-breadth of the realm inherited from our fathers is to be surrendered to the enemy by peace

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treaty or bargaining. Rather may we all die and the whole of Sweden burn! I never began the war. My neighbors lay in ambush when I was still an inexperienced boy."

Görtz now knelt for the first time.

"The world can never understand the hero who would rather stand by the conditions he has sworn to than play the cunning politician, but a coward is he who shuns the service of such a firmness. Small of soul were the augurs who stood by Your Majesty's cradle. They saw, indeed, the constellation of the Lion, but they did not read in the stars that the conflagration of the Swedish Empire already stood foretokened there—irrevocably without mercy. The champion who stepped from the cairn to assemble the Swedes for the great conflict needs men. I am a stranger, but as true as I live, I speak with heart and soul. As long as my strength holds out, I will gather stuff from east and west for a bulwark of the sort that, alas, can be made only with nails of good ducat-gold."

"That game may be daring."

"The daring is the delightful. A good diplomat should every day be as prepared for the block as a warrior for his bullet. If everything goes wrong, well, then the bulwark, too, will become a pyre that turns the night around us to bright day and the enemy to mere shadows and supernumeraries. There will then remain for me only the honorable

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madness of burning on the pyre beside my Hercules. Our good Luther's 'wine, woman, and song' has always smacked too much of the tavern for me, and I had rather make the words:

Who loves not woman, fame, and might,
A fool is he till death's dark night.

Fired by the sincerity of the moment and his own warmth, Görtz had forgotten to cancel the word "woman," but the king, not noticing it, went to him with flashing eyes.

"My image must not be set on the fiat pieces."

"We may plunder all Olympus for deposed gods."

The king stood a long time silent. He then added softly and with faltering voice: "Neither shall the arms of Sweden be set on them!" Over his frowning brows settled a deep, dark melancholy.

Surprised, irresolute, trembling, Görtz rose from the floor and, going to the window, pointed down at the square. "If at any time bitter thoughts overtake Your Majesty, do but go to the window and look at the people. Then it is not hard to get a hearty laugh."

"It has been long since I laughed from my heart."

Down in the square, Grothusen was going back and forth among the girls by the biscuit-stall, and

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behind him stood a drummer-boy with a sealed drum.

"Rattle a gallant roulade and bring the girls!" Grothusen commanded.

The boy plied the sticks, and when all the girls ran up inquisitively and stood around, Grothusen broke the seals and unfastened the drumhead. Thereupon he took from the drum all imaginable sorts of women's gear which he had purchased at the bazaar the last evening in Demotika. There were small kerchiefs and veils and mirrors and flasks of attar-of-roses and neck-cloths with crescents and coins. He waved the kerchiefs high in the air. With head thrown back and drops of sweat on his pepper-brown face, he cried his wares and auctioned them off. For one trifle he demanded a kiss, for another an embrace, for the third a dance in the open square.

"Look, look," continued Görtz, "how our colonel forces his heathenish kerchiefs on the Christian women-folk! He is a gay fellow, our friend down there, but men of that sort are not of the calibre to serve a Charles XII."

The king now began to bow as a sign that Görtz should retire.

"Calumniators have also said that you, baron, are a sad rascal. One thing I will say. When we work together from now on, you, baron, will not

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speak ill of any one in his absence, for in that case I always take the part of the absentee. How much evil have they not tried to whisper into my ear about that drum down there! And what did it contain? Why, harmless toys and rubbish! If, too, Grothusen was an extravagant servant, he has at least never stuck away anything in his own pouch either. — I wish now to look over a few matters."

Görtz bit his lip, but when he came down he beckoned his friend Grothusen to the *porte cochère* with a lofty gesture.

"The sick and bleeding lion from the Ukraine and Poltava has rested his paws so long that the claws have grown longer and sharper than ever. Press your hat down on your head and button your coat, my good sirs, and keep yourselves in readiness. The autumn storms are beginning."

The small garrison of Stralsund soon heard the enemy's cannon making music before the walls. The tocsin called the men to the ramparts or to burning houses. Toward morning the king would lie down with his hat over his face for an hour's rest on the stone pavement at the Franken Gate. Awake, he stared into the dark crown of his hat, but the soldiers who lighted him with hand-lanterns discerned only his chin and lips, on which still remained the smile, though it was compressed and cold as if it merely belonged to his cast of features. Then they

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whispered that they had never seen a more undaunted hero, but off in the starlight stood many high officers who said that only his death could save the Swedish realm.

He knew of what they spoke, although he pretended to notice nothing. The people for whose sake he had dreamed his greatest dreams were already looking for their salvation in his death. When did fate fall upon a king more terribly? Had he been born only to lead the Swedes in their last great conflict and then be cast aside like a worn-out tool? His sister's husband was already glancing at his crown, and the son of his favorite, now departed, sister was lifting his childish hand toward it.

At the Holy Communion he humbled himself and was bathed in honest tears, but he never wept over his own misfortunes. Were they not out-and-out foes, which he had to meet with an avenger's wrath? He grew harder and colder toward his officers, and often spoke with his hands clenched, but he also ruled more strictly over himself and his own thoughts. To be sure, he neglected his clothes even more than of old, so that he could wear the same grimy shirt for fourteen days; but he controlled his limping walk. His hair had already changed to silver, though he was hardly thirty-three, but when he looked up, awake, into the crown of his hat, he repeated to himself: "This must be the will of God that I am following." — Then he would rise like

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a rested youth and hand his cloak to some frozen graybeard. But if any one named his homeland or the Swedes, he picked at his coat buttons and was silent.

One day Grothusen was drilling his soldiers with greater ardor than usual down below his fair one's window at the Kniper Gate. Motionless as a picture, the old lady sat behind the flower-pots, and when Grothusen lifted his hat, the new braids gleamed.

He beckoned to his drummer.

"Your drum still has not a full speech in her mouth. Let us open it. Here are a pair of the most delightful little gold-embroidered shoes. Go up to the lady and say that they are a parting gift from Grothusen. Now the drum is empty."

"Herr general! There is a Turkish gold-piece at the bottom."

"To be sure! It has come to a trembling situation there. It is the king's money. Now we are to go out to Rügen, where the Prussians and Danes intend to land so as to shut us in on the sea side. Go with the coin to the king, and ask him to accept it as a reminder of the years when Grothusen had the fortune to serve him in distant lands. May the gold some day be recast in the melting-pot during years of peace as an honest coin, on which the Swedes may again behold both their arms and their king! Say all that in humility from Grothusen."

When all was arranged for decampment, Grothu-

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sen saluted with his broadsword before the seventy-year lady. As he rode along the streets, he waved to the inquisitive girls in the windows and shattered booths, and, for the first time since Demotika, the drum thundered with full voice. It roused such an echo from the church walls that it was like the rumble of the enemy's field-pieces. Fearless, elated, Düker was consulting with the king by the bottom of the stairway. Listening to the embittered whisperings of Bassewitz about Görtz, Daldorff rode up among the generals, and little Cronstedt clapped his major of artillery on the shoulder. Now he hastened to one side, now to the other. He glanced at his fast-shooting cannon as a good chief groom at his horses, and sometimes he polished with the tip of his cloak the newly discovered Polhem sighting-screws.

"It will be a hard struggle," said he, "and only when His Majesty actually stands on Swedish ground shall I say that the king's ride is ended."

The autumn storms roared over Rügen in the twilight, wailing and moaning on beach and headland. No star told of God's goodness, and when the troops were drawn up for prayers, the vengeful words of the Old Testament sounded from the mouth of the preacher. The Swedes were now so short of men that they set out tied dogs as sentries, whose mournful howling could be heard through the seething of the surf.

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"It 's a foreboding of death when the dogs wail," said the soldiers.

The country folk were armed with axes and scythes, but the enemy, sheltered by the dense rain, approached the shore, and finally landed more than ten thousand men in front of the almost unguarded village of Stresov. The gale tore away the mist, and the moon rose bright above the desolate region. As early as three o'clock at night, however, the advanced scouts of the enemy crept cautiously back over the sand, and reported that the Swedes were approaching.

The king halted a moment to unhook his cloak. Turning to Daldorff and the Royal Guard, he said: "The years have flown. We have had the good together. Who knows when the lead that is to be our bane is seething in the casting-ladle?"

Grothusen drew a yellow gauntlet from between the coat buttons at his breast and answered: "I received that glove from my gracious lord at Bender, and no night of frost has been so cold that the glove has not warmed my heart."

Thereupon Daldorff bared his head: "When I get my bullet, if my poor wounded clay could still smile and speak, it would turn toward the departing troops and call down a grateful man's blessing on his true-hearted brothers in arms. Ah, that victory might yet once more shine on our way! As a farmer finds it advisable to leave an old field fallow

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and sow a new, so God dismembers and changes kingdoms and empires. When He has sown the new borderlands, He permits no one to bear the boundary stones back to their former place. We do not understand His will, we perceive only that He is against us."

The king answered: "God is *for* us. It cannot be His will that the Swedish Empire should be divided. If that be so, then may He give us the token by smiting us with death man after man!"

"That is a plain and true saying," replied Daldorff.

The officers who had whispered aside in the starlight before the city gate of Stralsund no longer remembered their dark thoughts. Instead, they pressed forward among the Royal Guard so as to march next to the king. It seemed to them that they recognized in his person something of God's own hard and merciless love for the right and for the accomplishment of His will.

The conversation died down. The trumpets ceased to play and the drums to beat; the banners were borne along lowered and furled. With sword drawn, the king went before his troops. He had barely three thousand men. They were now to fight three against ten, surprise the enemy, and chase them down into the sea.

He came to a standstill. "What can that be? Here are obstructions, and off in the moonlight I

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see a redoubt. The enemy has made good use of the time.—Forward!"

At the same instant a row of flashes spurted along the parapet, and the first volley broke through the night, but the Swedes thrust aside the obstacles and stormed up the rampart.

Cronstedt's cannon-balls soughed over their heads and cast up stones and sand where they struck the entrenchments. The ground trembled, and from all sides the fire of the musketry sent its lightnings. There was whining and shrieking, as if an army of hungry kites had sailed out over the shore. Clouds of smoke shot up so high that only in isolated places could the light of the moon break through and paint white expanses, as of snow, on the ground. When the din momentarily abated, the combatants could still hear from afar the howling of the fastened dogs, but soon the thunder grew so violent that the soldiers could not make out the officers' shouts of command. With hands clenched on their sword-hilts, the Swedes rushed forward like berserkers to the duel. It was no longer an ordered battle with leaders and obeying battalions. It was the last warriors of the army that had marched through Europe, who now in the autumn of their achievements offered up their blood for the last time south of the Swedish sea. It was a standing breast to breast in a hand-to-hand, life-and-death combat for eternal glory or shame.

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Colonel Jacob Torstenson already lay fallen, but his brother, Karl Ulrik, burst in over the rampart with his guardsmen and fought his way into the midst of the foe's entrenchments. Forced slowly out, his back pressed against the earthen wall and the dying Captain Adlerfeldt between his feet, he shouted: "Hold on gallantly, dear comrades! My grandfather led a whole Swedish army, and I won't lay down my sword before any one but the Dessauer himself."

Bare-headed, with the flame of wrath and enthusiasm on his brow, the king hewed his way through blades and musket-butts. He went to meet the murdering sword-points with the autumn storms in his breast, humbled, indifferent before wounds and death. Again the toothless, masculinely ugly face of Ensign Åberg grinned beside him, and Seved Tolvslag shattered heads and weapons. Musket-flashes spurted from all sides and singed the king's tattered soldier's coat. He thrust and fired. He was seized round the waist by rude hands, he wrestled breast to breast with plain, swearing privates. A Danish officer, who recognized him, caught one hand into his thin hair and tried to wrench his sword from him, but the king snatched a pistol from his belt, and shot the Dane through the body, so that he fell dead. Then new foes leaped forward, and the Dessauer's cavalry and field-pieces fell upon the Swedes from the flanks, so that in the stormy

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November night they were surrounded by a ring of stabbing swords and flashing lightnings.

Major-General Stromfelt gave the king his horse, but in the darkness the beast became entangled in an obstruction, was felled by a cannon-ball, and remained lying on top of the king. When he tried to work himself free, he was struck on the chest by a spent cannon-ball so that the blood gushed from his lips. Everything grew black before his eyes, and he sank back unconscious and half buried in sand, but with hand still clenched on his sword.

Lieutenant-Colonel Tranfelt fought in the midst of a swarm of Danes. He brandished a weapon in either hand, and beneath his torn coat and shirt three wounds gleamed on his naked breast. When he could no longer stand, he fought on his knee, until he fell and gave up the ghost.

Cronstedt, wounded and bleeding, had been lifted upon one of his field-pieces.

"It is the Romans of the north," he said, "who are falling to-night in defence of their last provinces."

Before him lay a dead artillerist youth with portfire still burning, and in the midst of the roar from the battle and the storm came from nearby the sound of a voice in prayer. It was a chaplain, who was bending over the wounded and dying behind the fighters.

"Thou King of armies and of kings, cry not unto

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us as to the children of Jeroboam's house: 'He that dieth in the city, him shall the dogs devour; and he that dieth in the fields, him shall the birds of the air devour, for thus the Lord hath spoken!' Wherefore dost Thou refuse us a sign that Thou art yet with us? Wherefore grantest Thou not to me to shed the peace of victory over our men that bleed, so that their hard bed may be made soft for them?"

Bassewitz had already been carried dying from the *mêlée* on two muskets; and the veteran Daldorff who, bleeding in the midst of fallen guardsmen, had saved the king's life in so many struggles, and who had led his Småland horsemen into the jaws of death at Holofzin, lay on his outspread cloak with his brow pale as a corpse. The shells threw their sudden light over the hacking and crossing swords, and over the shadow-like fighting soldiers. By the light from a field-piece Guardsman Corporal Baumgarten finally recognized the king, lifted him on his horse, and placed him in the midst of the repulsed Swedes.

Then a persistent and violent drumming penetrated the ears of the king, and when he turned sidewise to investigate it, he made out at a distance in the gray of the dawn a drummer-boy, who with drumsticks in hand still stayed behind, facing the foe. Beside him an officer lay on his back with both arms extended at full length. The large laced hat

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still rested on his head with dignity and elegance. A neck-cloth of French lace, specked with red, fluttered in the wind, and round the skirt of the coat there shone all about on the dewy heath bits of confectionery and silver coins.

"Who is the fallen man?" asked the king.

Major Riddarstadt answered: "That is a gallant warrior before God, but one whom many men reviled. It is one of Your Majesty's cherished friends —it is Grothusen."

When Riddarstadt had given this reply, he himself went back into the *mêlée* and met his death.

It was on the darkest of winter nights that the king in his six-oared barge finally left Stralsund, which was smoking beneath cannon-balls and shells. Düring, who had so unweariedly shared the hardships of the king's ride, had fallen in his blood before the city wall, but his brother sat in the stern at the tiller. Many workmen with clubs and pickaxes walked on either side of the channel broken through the ice, and Rosen, who stood in the bow, was such a living likeness of the king that it was to him they waved their farewell.

Pursued by the enemy's shot, the barge drew near the open sea. Vainly, however, did Rosen look for the two Swedish vessels, the *Snap-up* and the *Swift Sven*, which had been ordered to meet them there, but had been driven back by the storms.

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The king, then, with his two companions and a lackey, climbed on board of a heavy freight-galley with red patches on its wretched blackened sails, which hoisted anchor. Where now, forsooth, was the proud fleet swimming, on whose decks fourteen years ago, young and confident of victory, he had heard old Piper's glad hand-clapping? The threatening line of masts that Rosen pointed out on the horizon was the squadron of Tordenskjold. Only far out at sea did they meet the brigantine *Snap-up*, and with wrathful orders and gloomy eyes the king set foot on the belated ship. Was this the gracious master of whom the seamen had heard tell that he used to tuck his hat under his arm with graceful bowings?

He raised his hand to salute the crew, but it sank slowly, tight-clenched, and his first words under the Swedish man-of-war's flag were words of chastisement: "The captain of the *Snap-up* shall be flogged; but as for the captain of the *Swift Sven*, which has altogether failed to appear, he shall be shot!"

The storm raised the ice-floe aloft. The waves lifted white necks above the bulwarks like the ghosts of drowned men, but even when the darkness settled down once more, the king remained standing silently by the mast. Had he not been a prince, he might even yet have been able to turn and seek for himself a peaceful retreat; but as it was, men would soon have pursued him and dragged him with them.

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He ought to have been permitted to keep a privateer fleet and to have lived out his years on it amid shot and cutlass, but as it was, his subjects commanded him to turn home to guard their manure-stacks and dairies. The nearer he approached to the shore of Scania, the more clearly it seemed to him that it was like a landing among the enemy. He remembered the early morning in the royal residence at Karlberg, when before his grandmother and sisters were awake, he stole along the stairs with Hultman and rode off to the war. He did not want to see the well-known faces again. He did not want to ride through the streets of Stockholm and see the people welcome with pine torches a king driven in by wind and weather. He saw, to be sure, that these Swedes continually gave up their lives for him and for the bit of land that was still theirs, but he knew also that in their silent prayers many of them called upon God to give him a speedy death. He saw all that as clearly as his eyes had previously been darkened. He did not think of peace and reconciliation. He could not forget that the thousands who had followed him had got their bullets, that the tears and blessings of his people had made soft beds of their overgrown graves, that they had become holy men, whose sins were forgotten and their virtues glorified. For a warrior there were but two ways of reconciliation with God and man, and they were victory or a death-wound.

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When he stepped ashore on the plain of Scania in the streaming night-rain, he did not kneel, and he drew no sigh of sadness or joy. Hurriedly, without a single word, he went to a great stone that was called the Staff Stone. He, the rider from Demotika, the soldier who had lain down to sleep untroubled on the snow-drift, forgot himself so completely at that moment that he sought shelter in the lee of a stone from a few harmless drops of water. There he remained standing.

No bells rang in the churches. There was no sweeping and lighting of fires at the Crown estates. While the night-rain splashed in the roof-gutters, the Swedes slept in their homes and had no premonition that, after fifteen years of saga-like victories and nameless misfortunes, their king was now treading the soil of his realm with the wrath of failure in his soul, received and greeted by no one. He no longer looked back, only forward. Revenge!—that word swung his thoughts like a hammer. Revenge on the perjurers, revenge on the world that had made of him a fugitive weakling without money, without power—but a great and royal revenge! He knew that next day many of his subjects would rejoice, but also that many tremblers would seek to divine as to the gallows and the block. He smiled at the thought. His exasperation came from diffidence and wounded love. It was because of this that in his last years he spoke of

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Sweden so evasively. He wanted to punish and conquer these latest enemies, but not on the place of execution. Calmly and commandingly he meant to tread the earth which they were almost ready to pluck away from him. He wished to place himself among the gloomy faces. Careless as a shepherd amid the bushes of the wood, he wished to sleep among the conspirators, if there were any, and compel them yet again to lower their flags and go where he went. He wished to conquer his Swedish enemies by showing them that they were still faithful to him.

Day began to glimmer, and some tillers of the soil came out on the plain, but all the colors shone so hard and strong! Everything seemed so cold and strange!

"Is this Sweden, then?" muttered Rosen behind his turned-up coat collar. "I hardly recognize it any more."

"Your eyes are red with the wind," answered the king. Later he added: "What if we do not recognize everything here at home, as long as others recognize us?"

He got one of the laborers to show them the way to Trelleborg. With the most tranquil countenance he spoke of his desire to meet the learned professors at Lund, and the great Polhem, who was to help him build a canal across Sweden. In the lowest corner of the realm the three gentlemen

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walked between the fences and slumbering cottages of the small town like shipwrecked adventurers who had become strangers in their own land, and under the hat which he had drawn down over his face, Rosen wept like a child.

When the king was to give the guide his fee, he noted that all the ducats had been given away on the journey. He found only the Turkish coin that Grothusen had carried along in the drum and sent him with the wish that some time, in peaceful years, the gold might be melted into an honest Swedish coin. It was the king's last piece, and even that was not his, for it had been borrowed of a Turkish Jew.

Without a word, he laid the foreign coin in the hand of the Swedish peasant.

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THE returning Swedish soldiers tramped from inn to inn with dusty clothing and worn-out shoes. On the cart in front of them jostled the Finnish women whom the king had ransomed from the Turks and married off among his soldiers, and beside them on the straw beneath the wagon-seat stood the cage of chameleons that Professor Eneman had fetched from Asia. The cart with the women was soon left behind, and the animals died, but between the sun-browned soldiers and grooms was still led Brandklipparen, though he was weary with years, stiff in gait, and no longer bore any conquering hero in the saddle.

A tall, thin man with restless eyes and knitted brows always walked a trifle in front of the others. His cheek was dusky as bark, but his teeth gleamed from the midst of the grizzled beard which he never took the time to cut off, since he had neither knife nor shears. The wretchedest vagabond would have scorned his bedraggled coat, but he carried with him all he owned,—which was a sack and a cudgel. At the start of the journey, to be sure, he had been sent around to borrow money, but it had long since been strewn to the winds. So that strangers might not point their fingers at his poverty and his country, he called himself a plain private, but he was a royal guardsman, and was named Ehrensköld.

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In his youth he had, one October night, stabbed a certain Ensign Gyllenstjerne, and his wits still fluttered so uncertainly that, although he was the merriest with the ale-can, he lay awake at night with restless thoughts. Hardly did the dawn brighten before he thumped on the floor of the hostelry with his wooden staff to waken his comrades.

At evening, when the exhausted band gathered round the table in the hall of the inn, he remained standing and cheerily raised the can toward all the inquisitive folk who climbed up outside the windows.

"Look, look!" whispered the beholders. "Every scar on that man's face and hands is a saga of some exploit. These are the heroes returning from Ilion!"

Later, when they saw Brandklipparen's rigid pace in the courtyard, they added: "And they have brought along the wooden horse."

But when Ehrensköld had told that it was Brandklipparen, while high-born countesses stepped out of the wagon with bread and sugar, so that they might be able to tell their descendants that Brandklipparen had once eaten out of their hand, he emptied his can to the dregs and beat on the table as a sign to his comrades that they should disperse.

"You don't let us either sit or sleep, with your homesickness," his comrades grumbled. "If a meal is laid out, you at once shout to us to get up and go on, even before the meat is carved."

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Then he grew mistrustful and rancorous toward his former friends, and one morning he stole off ahead of the others.

He hardly needed to read the sign-posts or to ask his way. He knew that he went toward the north, that he always turned in on the most direct road. For year after year his homesickness had become more and more overpowering, and now that at last every step brought him nearer to the places of which he had never spoken, but on which he had always brooded, his longing only increased in strength. At times he would stand with hands crossed over his staff and stare at the road, but without himself being conscious of it, and he would then begin to walk on and on. If, on a rainy night, he happened to be turned with harsh words from a door where he had humbly called himself a poor Swedish baggage-driver who prayed to be given a piece of bread by the warm blaze, he forgot that he was no longer in military service. If, then, in the light of the embers, he saw through the window loaves of bread and a bowl of milk on the table, he bent the strips of lead, pulled out two or three small panes, and took for himself as much of the viands as he could reach. But as soon as he had appeased his thirst and stuffed his sack full of fragments of bread, he remembered that he was a good warrior, and before he departed he thrust in his stick and brought it down on the table with

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such thundering violence that the bowls and loaves leaped. Then the people of the house, who ran in on all sides, understood that it was not a common thief.

He got to Stralsund before the others, but the city surrendered to the enemy, and their fleets barred the Baltic. After many adventures he at last found in Amsterdam a Dutch smack, which lay ready to sail for Bohus, and into which he was received on such terms that he had a bed on the straw in the cabin under the skipper's patchwork quilt.

But as soon as he heard the anchor-chain rattle, he struck his stick against the roof of the cabin and called to the skipper: "Good father, when you get in sight of the Swedish skerries, you are to let me know, so that I can fix my beard and clothes, and go on deck."

The skipper promised to fulfil this request, but hardly did he get on deck before there was another knock on the cabin roof.

"Homeward, homeward bound," stammered Ehrensköld, taking the captain by the hand. "You have sailed the seas and experienced many things, father. Tell me, whence comes this delusion of the mind which determines that a man must know himself at home in order to be at peace with himself? Down there among the Turks, when poor Funck died of the fever, I had charge of the watch at the burial; but trust me, I could hardly hold my blade

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or remember the word of command. The stones lay so white—the cypresses stood so indifferent! If I myself had been laid in that place, I could not have slept in peace. I should have torn through the earth over my head and begged the Lord God for pity."

The skipper answered: "Has not the same Father's hand formed every part of the earth and even the frail boards that now bear us in the storm? Turn over to the wall and take a good rest! You warriors of the land are bad sailors, and we 're getting stiff weather."

The first thing next morning, when the captain was standing by the steersman, he heard fresh rapping on the cabin roof.

"I have a bullet here under my ribs, and I have never rightly understood whether it is that or homesickness which has so exhausted my strength that now I can't hold myself up straight without pain. Just this time of the morning, when it is half light, but the sun has not yet risen, is the hour of homesickness."

It was a restless passage, and the seas thundered. One night the captain came upon the cabin stairs with a horn lantern and threw the light on Ehrensköld. He sat awake on the straw with the staff beside him and the sack as a pillow, and his hair was now so long that it hung over his ears.

"My good sir," began the skipper, as he fas-

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tened the lantern to the hook in the roof, "we are now at the Swedish skerries outside Uddevalla, but the storm holds heavy, and the night is misty and dark. We must turn and make to sea and wait for clearer weather."

"Yes, turn the smack, you there!" shouted Ehrensköld, so that the cabin rang. "I don't want to go home. No, no,—what business have I at home, to be sure? In Kalmar church lies my father, and his scutcheon is on the wall. My brother is in captivity. My little sisters have become tall and married and old. They are no more the same. There are no little sisters any more. There is no home any more."

With such words he replied to the captain, but when the latter was about to go, he held him fast by the coat-sleeve.

"Don't listen to me!" he said. "Stick bravely to the same course as before! A good soldier must n't come home like a coward after long and honest service with his king."

"But the smack, my good sir! It is my only property, and on it I command. I 'm fairly sure I see the beacon-fire in the northwest, but the coast is dangerous here and full of pirates, who set out false lights."

Ehrensköld was no longer an enfeebled man. He sat straight up with one leg out of the bed and seized the captain in an iron grip.

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"If you 've any respect for an officer's will, then sail ahead. It 's true I 've nothing else to give you but the wretched rags that I shall still wear with honor when I go ashore; but by Kalmar Town I have a little estate, if it has n't been taken from me. That you shall have in requital, if the sloop goes to wreck."

The skipper thought that homesickness had quenched his wits. He well knew that if the helm was not put down in time, they would be on the rocks. He wrestled to free himself. His coat-sleeve tore at the shoulder-seam, and with naked arm he sprang to the ladder.

A blow shook the ship so violently that the candle in the lantern fell over and went out.

"Jesus! There, master, you have the Swedish skerries!"

"Then may this moment be blessed! Not since I was a child have I sprung from bed in the morning with a lighter heart."

Ehrensköld heard shots and a struggle. He took the sack and stick and clambered up to the icy deck. The seas burst over him, but the dawn broke through the snowy mist, and he saw that the boat had stranded on a rocky isle and that a swarm of men were disarming the crew.

"Give us what you 've got!" demanded a red-bearded man, raising his musket. "Stranded wreckage belongs to the folk on the shore."

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Ehrensköld clenched his hand on the shaft of his stick and slung the beggar-sack in front of him.

"Take it, take it! The peace of mind that I 've just found, no bullets of yours can take from me; but if you had n't a gun, a game of this sort should cost you dear.—I am an officer of the Crown."

Cautiously Red-beard lowered his musket.

On the summit of the island glowed a false beacon that had burned down low, and behind the cliffs lay a galliot without a flag. Beside the extinguished stern-lantern sat a sickly, sallow young man wrapped in a splendid fox-skin pelisse and with two crutches on his knee.

"What 's this, Norcross?" he cried, with a voice that was thin but shrilled piercingly like a whistle. "Hurry up there, hurry up there!"

Red-beard answered, "The man here says that he 's a Crown man, and in that case we might do better to give him a bullet than to let him slip ashore and carry the tale. Come, fellow, tell us who you are! I see your rags well enough, but no Crown uniform. Have you been away so long that you have n't heard tell of Lassë of the Highway? There he sits on the galliot. That 's Commodore Gatenhjelm, look you!"

"My name," said Ehrensköld, "you may know if you first get me clothing according to my rank, but I care little for the harm you can do me, if only I may tread the soil of Sweden once more in

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this earthly life. I clearly see that ye are godless free-booters, and I recognize clearly another land than the bright and happy one I left—but in any case I am now home. I 'm home! My life I can give up freely, but don't deny that I may first step down on the Swedish island!"

"That 's reasonable," answered Gatenhjelm. "But hurry up there, hurry up!" He rapped still more impatiently on the railing with a crutch.

Ehrensköld threw his staff on the deck like a surrendered sword and stepped down on the island. He walked forward slowly several paces, as if the ground had taken fast hold of his feet. Then he knelt, stroked and caressed the cliff with his hands and bent down his cheek to it.

"Praise be to Thee, Heavenly Father," he whispered, "who hast led home Thy wandering son by such long and strange paths. Thine, Thine be the glory!"

With that Gatenhjelm gave a sign, and Norcross laid the musket to his eye and from the railing shot Ehrensköld through the head.

When the day arose, the pirates had already steered in with their prey to the coast of Bohus, but out on the island lay the dead warrior with his arms round the cliff.

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In Marstrand's Church

RESTLESS burghers were talking together in the square at Marstrand, and a fisherman stated that Tordenskjold intended shortly to make for the island with his ships and seize the fortress.

Martin Rosengård, the sexton, came across the square with his bunch of keys and went his undeviating way to the church through the midst of the throng without speaking to any one.

"He is old and hard of hearing," said the folk.

Martin Rosengård answered softly to himself: "But he's good of memory is old Martin. He is mickle good of memory. He never forgets the day that gave him gladness and courage for a whole lifetime. He never forgets Baggë, though by this the man has lain five years in his grave with a commission from Bender under his pillow. He was our teacher, and even from the mould shall he teach us. Therefore it is that to-day we ought to remember him. He belongs to us, even though his deeds adorned past days. In our heart is a fortress that no enemies can take from us. Wring your hands! It is Sunday morning, and old Martin has his affairs to attend to."

His withered figure became a head taller, and he nodded with inward content, when he had locked the church door behind him. He set blue-and-yellow irises in the candlesticks and folded up the

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altar-cloth of Vadstena lace. A recollection from his youth so occupied his thoughts that he almost believed he heard voices and the clatter of spurs in the empty church.

That had also been a Sunday, and Gyldenlöw, who with his Danes had just conquered the island, had ordered the pastor, Fredrik Baggë, to offer the *Te Deum* and read the customary Danish prayers for King Christian and his victorious army. Gyldenlöw himself sat in the commandant's pew with his officers, and in the aisles up to the door stood foreign soldiers, so that Baggë's mass-robe looked faded and shabby among all the glittering uniforms. The Swedish men and women in the farthest pews stared fixedly ahead, and many among them whispered bitingly, when they saw his tranquil face in the sunlight of the open window, where sparrows flew in.

He intoned with a clearer voice than ever before. When mass had been celebrated, and he stood in the pulpit, Gyldenlöw softly interrupted: "Baggë, Baggë, see that you preach well for us!"

He proclaimed the magnitude of the victory with such flashing zeal that the stern soldiers' eyes grew moist, but when he came to the prayer for the king, he clasped his hands high above his brow, and prayed his old prayer for the king of the Swedes.

Then Gyldenlöw sprang from his pew, and in

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the little church there was such a din and cursing and such a ringing of spurs and weapons as if there was a hand-to-hand fight, but rising above the clamor all the while was heard Baggë's quiet prayer.

Soldiers thronged up on the pulpit steps and led him down, but he kept on to the last word of the prayer.

"If you have nothing else to say," shouted Gyldenlöw, "then expect a sentence of death or life imprisonment."

"I have still something to add."

The sobbing in the farthest pews became still, and the Danes held themselves back, waiting.

Then Baggë began to pray for the Swedish army, for the humblest men in the ranks, and for victory, victory for the Swedes, so that they might return and set free his island.

Gyldenlöw took several violent steps to the altar rail and snapped his gloves in the air.

"Fetch the handcuffs that hang in front of the church door by the penance-stool!" he commanded.

Two soldiers went out and returned dragging the chains, which clanked against the pavement. Gyldenlöw stopped in front of Baggë.

"I am ready to believe that you are a worthy shepherd and that you have acted from mere zeal. Therefore I'll extend you pardon this once more, as soon as you show repentance. But by God! if you rebel again, you have nothing else to expect than

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court-martial and sentence. You have a house and home. Consider well! I shall wait patiently, while you examine your own mind. Release him, soldiers, and let him yet again mount into the pulpit! And you, good folk behind there on the benches, you have heard my words."

Baggē straightened his mantle as if to obey and betake himself to the pulpit. But then he turned again toward the congregation.

"I have something to repent. That is rightly said. But I can impart it here where I stand and do not therefore need to enter the pulpit."

Gyldenlöw pushed the nearest officers back, and set himself in his place, but his fingers played impatiently with his sword-hilt. All the audience by this time stood either in the aisle or at the doors of the pews.

Instead of clasping his hands, Baggē stretched them out before him, and no one knew rightly what he meant by this.

"I repent," he said, "that I have too long delayed with the prayer which perhaps lay nearest my heart."

With that he began to pray for the crops and the weather, for the lumber rafts on the river and the hay-wagons by the cottages, and for all the Swedish land, to which he vowed his loyalty even if in future days he should pine in the deepest and darkest dungeon.

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Then the soldiers understood why he had held out his hands. While he was yet speaking, they screwed on the clamps, and afterwards, in the midst of their drawn swords, led him from the church and up to the fortress.

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Katerinushka, Little Mother

IT was a winter night with the cold starlight that causes a lonely man to weep without knowing why. The crowned King of the Revels, who had just been carried through the streets of Moscow, had been acclaimed by the people more silently than of old, and in the midst of the disbanding holiday processions there was whispering about hate and conspiracies and imprisonments. Whenever two men met where they could not be overheard, they execrated the czar. The priests muttered by their censers that he ate meat on fast-days and worshipped the gods of the Romans instead of the saints. The Boyars lamented that they never got a chance to sleep in peace at night, but had become toiling slaves, who had to rebuild all Russia from the cellar to the cap of the tower. They related that he had gone mad. If he did not sit in his travelling-coach or at his microscope, he cured diseases like a doctor, made boots like a shoemaker, boats like a shipwright, and ivory chessmen like a turner, or even cut off heads like an executioner. After such a day's work, they had sometimes at table seen him go off and sit down among the musicians, where he beat the drum with such skill that in that art as well no one could surpass him. The merchants at their counter grumbled about the long wars, and the serfs pulled at their thick coats in bitter

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mood and hid their sacred, shorn-off beards in their pockets.

The later the night drew on, the more sharply glinted the stars. Alexei, the son of the czar, sat alone in his vaulted room, which was wholly painted in scarlet with green festoons of leaves. Round about him on the floor lay theological works with pious legends of the saints. He held his pen still poised over a half-written letter to his Affrosinya, the red-haired Finnish thrall; but the exertion wearied him, and his pen sank. He forgot that they had taken from him his sword and his right of succession to the realm. In the stiff silken pelisse of the ancient czars and small boots studded with turquoises, he imagined himself to be in his secluded castle examining the work of the court goldsmith and conversing with learned monks. Then he dreamed of going down into the chapel and performing his devotions under the staring Christ head in the crypt, but far about him spread a realm of the ancient days, where the village bells rang, and where men arose late from bed and early put out the light. With that, Czar Peter's blood leaped to his brow, and he imagined himself ending the evening with a drinking-bout and hurling empty pewter pots at the heads of Boyars, who raised thankful shouts of joy.

The door opened behind him, but he supposed it was the servants and remained sitting in his meditation. Only when he heard steps and laugh-

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ter in the corridors did he turn his lean and grayish-pale face with its hollow cheeks and crafty eyes. It was his father. It was the czar, who was coming with his guests of the night, and between them they carried a long table on which stood ten burning waxlights fastened into a like number of buns. How often had Alexei taken medicine to make himself sick and avoid appearing at his father's banquet! With what anguish had he gone in disguise with his Affrosinya as far south as the vineyards of Naples, in order to hide from this father, who was now lifting the cane above his head! He moved back toward the recess.

"Alexei," commanded the czar, "you shall be host to-night. Sit down opposite me!"

At the same moment that they all sat down, the czar gave his neighbor a resounding box on the ear, and shouted: "Let that go on round the table! Nobody knows how well such great gentlemen as sit with a prince deserve a box on the ear."

The cuff proceeded heartily around the table with blow after blow as far as Adjutant Vyasemski, who was the czar's nearest neighbor on the other side. Being a very young and as yet inexperienced officer, he grew pale, with hand half raised, and stared at the czar. There was no one in the party to whom the czar had taken such a liking as to this golden-haired youth; but a rumor had been whispered to-night that he had joined himself to the

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son and the rebels. The czar therefore wished to test him, and with the fury of Ivan the Terrible in his look and the good nature of a Muscovite artisan in his laugh, he said to him: "Vyasemski, my lad, soon no one will dare to name my name in my own kingdom without cursing me. Here is my cheek. By God and His only begotten son I enjoin you to sincerity. If you believe the slanderers, then strike away! In that case I deserve no better than the others. What I require is truthfulness—and I shall thank you."

Vyasemski rose and moved his chair aside in order to kneel, but with that he fixed his eyes on the light of the candles, and whispered: "My hands are unclean. Let me wash them first!"

The czar assented with a melancholy nod and gazed after him.

"He, as well! I had expected otherwise."

He held up the empty beaker in front of him, and the czarina, who had secretly watched him all day, entered in a simple blue dress and sat down on the vacated seat. He laid his hand on her arm, and turned toward Alexei.

"Well, why don't you fill up and drink to us? That is good. Again! And yet again! Fall into position! Quicker! No, ye others are to sit, but *you* shall stand. You shall stand up to answer. Is it true the monks have told you that you are the darling and hope of all the nation?"

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On the other side of the table stood Alexei, shaken by ague, and his wrinkled face grew ashen and old. The czar looked as if he were the son, and at every new question Alexei twisted the long lace neck-cloth harder about his finger, but answered never a word.

"Is it true that you hate me, the author of your being, that you wait with longing for the hour of my death so as to overthrow the labor of my days and nights? Is it true that your father confessor enjoined you to become a martyr for the people? Ah! there are other martyrs in the world than those who pour out their blood in the market-place for the sake of the people. I would fain be a father and benefactor to you all.—But who can say he has fetched down a golden tablet from heaven, on which it stands inscribed that his work was the right one? Perhaps ye shall one day shout that this ninny, in whose veins my blood is disgraced, is the man whom ye needed for your salvation. But ye shall shout in vain. The life that I kindled I can also quench. Katerinushka, little mother, what have I done to be so lonely?"

With closed eyes he leaned his face on the czarina's arm and laughed sobbingly, so that one by one the guests at the table began to rise and steal aside behind the czarina. His laughter was so genial and warm that they had never heard anything like it unless in some honest hut in the country, but

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they knew from of old the mirth that brimmed up ever higher with despair and scorn, and they feared for their lives.

"Katerinushka, my child, wherever in all of Europe they strike a medal or print a pamphlet, there they dress me up as a fool. What have I done to be so lonely? There is a like lonely man, who is now gathering his troops in Sweden to lead them against the Norwegian mountains. Strange, we should have both come to the same thing by such different ways!—Why does the adjutant delay? I long to see whether among you all there is not *one* who is honest enough to show me openly whether he loves me or not. May he strike heartily!"

He raised his tear-stained, laughing face, but the czarina stroked his curly hair gently and caressingly, while in a thin voice, long since broken, she chanted to a folk tune:

The great, with their servants and guards to attend them,
Are lonely as beggars that roam on the moor;
But the humble—at twilight the angels befriend them
And lull with soft music the sons of the poor.

"I am concerned about Vyasemski, the adjutant. Is he a craven who has gone off because he dares not strike the czar? Or is he hesitating outside the door? Or perhaps—does he love me?"

Menshikoff, who had remained sitting, arose with his great powdered wig and his orders.

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"In the old days, when I was only a confectioner's boy who carried my tarts about the streets of Moscow, I could make you merry, little father, when I talked. I could so dress up my stories that you imagined you saw horrible owls and owlets fluttering before you or absurd dwarfs walking on their hands. But we have become old; both you, my benefactor, and I. I must obey your imperial command."

He went out into the corridor in front of the room, and the czar called after him: "Why does the adjutant tarry, I say? Were his hands so unclean that he needed to wash them so long? I should like to see the water."

When Menshikoff came back, he carried a large tin basin half full of a red fluid that was like frothing wine.

"Your Adjutant Vyasemski is dead," said Menshikoff. "He washed his hands in his own heart's blood."

The czar again closed his eyes and leaned against the arm of the czarina. While she stroked his hair and combed it between her fingers, she heard him whisper: "He loved me not—he only feared—Katerinushka, little mother!"

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The Dark Yule Service

IT was Christmas Eve. The parson's widow sat in the parsonage at Undenäs with the account of the deceased on her knee. Her bodice was made of his worn and much weathered cloak, she had tied his starched handkerchief about her head with a knot at the nape of the neck, and her thin fingers, blue with cold, lay stretched on the paper. In figure she was taller and leaner than other women, and every one hated and maligned her for her avarice and spitefulness. Even in good times no tallow candle had ever been lighted in the parsonage. She drove the servants from bed at three o'clock on winter nights, though they could not see by the scanty light of the torch or the fire, but sat down to yawn and gossip in the loft. In the middle of the road between the cow-house and the stable she would say to the man that he must hang his wooden shoes on his back and save them for Sunday, and if any one was condemned to penance, she was always supposed to be the secret informer.

It was already dusk, and through the panes, which were half covered with snow, she stared indivertibly at the shingled wooden church and the steeple. Beside her stood a man with a thick curled wig and a reddish but ever smiling face. It was the manager Trulsson from the mill below.

"Do you think he 'll come?" she inquired anx-

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iously. "He was my only man, and he has stayed away since he went into the city. Three days he has been gone. Thrashed he ought to be. Surely he was caught at the tavern on Monday and therefore taken as a soldier according to the new proclamation."

"I feared that it was going ill here in the house of sorrow," answered Trulsson in a friendly tone. "For that reason I rode up here. Don't complain, Mother Ingebritt, because at bottom there's not such a great difference between happiness and misfortune as we think. Both of them are what we make them. You should only see the fine old fellow, Soop, my gracious master, when he stands by the dinner-table in the hall, erect and without saying a word, counting up the great heaps of money for his yearly taxes. Six hundred dollars of silver coin in luxury taxes for the women's imported silks, sixty dollars for lace, forty for sable cloaks, twenty for special hats and clothes, four for tea and coffee, forty for the gilded fittings on the coach, forty for all the tobacco-smokings and such trumpery, parade tax and quota tax for property and dependents. Think of it, that the iron must be offered to the state, which has nothing to pay with, and that in all the mill there are scarcely three able-bodied men to send down to the forges! And yet old Soop stands there so grand and fine, shaking Görtz's copper idols out of his purses. You are too greedy

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after this world's goods, Mother Ingebritt; that's what everybody thinks."

"Poverty begets thrift," she muttered harshly. "Never has such want come upon a people. We have eaten bark bread since November, and in order to support a dragoon, poor Vibelius himself went out into the fields like a farm-servant, until he sank down and gave up the ghost. I can hardly get a pound of sugar for five dollars or a cask of herring for fifty, and salt costs over a hundred. To-morrow we have Christmas Service, but no tallow for a single candle. We have no clergyman to read the Lord's Word and no sexton. The horses are taken for the baggage-train; and if the man does n't come back, I 'm lost, for there stands the place without a man. For God's mercy, tell me he 's coming!"

She pressed her brow to the panes, faltering and irresolute.

"He 's coming," replied Trulsson. "I hear steps out in the snow."

At the same moment the door was pushed open with much clatter and noise. Several loud-mouthed soldiers in tattered uniforms staggered across the threshold, and behind them followed a crowd of gaunt vagabonds, mostly young men and boys. They were uncannily black and distorted in countenance from eating bark bread, and they had strips of sheepskin tied around their legs and feet. She recognized her servant in the hindmost youth, and

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comprehended that he had been taken for a soldier and carried off with the rest.

"Serve up what the house has to offer!" commanded one of the soldiers, and blew on his stiffened hands.

"Here there 's nothing, absolutely nothing," she answered without moving.

"What is n't offered must be taken. For seven hours we 've wandered about in Tiveden Forest from one deserted farm to another."

Spurs and broadswords rang, voices murmured, and Mother Ingebritt swayed back and forward, and plucked with her hands at her apron. She gave her servant a questioning glance. For a long time he listened to the quarrel, stroking his neck with an awkward gesture.

Finally he looked down at the floor and uttered very softly: "You were always hard and stingy, mother. Therefore last summer I stole four loaves of black bread and hid them in the chest of drawers in the porch corridor. Those I'll divide with the others right before your eyes, because in such need there are no enemies."

The soldiers noisily snatched the bunches of keys from Mother Ingebritt's belt. Chests and cupboards were opened. Earthen bowls were filled with hidden delicacies, and amid swearing the soldiers thawed out a piece of ham, where the maggots lay frozen along the bone.

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"Just be quiet, my good men!" admonished Trulsson in a fatherly and friendly way. "As the winter frost killed the maggots in the meat, so the misery that is now passing over our country is killing many evil maggots that were eating at our heart."

While he spoke he was looking at Mother Ingebritt, as though he had directed the words particularly at her, but she tried to silence him and looked away.

Then he spoke in a pastorly, sermonizing tone. With back to the fire, he stood in front of her in the middle of the room, while he folded his hands and continued:

"Just be quiet, my good men, and let us not eat without praying first. Such a night of misfortune as this is given men by Almighty God to make them good and great, and so that a little people may come to appear more beautiful and glorious in their poverty than all the others in their gilded splendor."

She went away to the opened cupboard and clattered the cups back and forward, so as to escape hearing him, but she turned toward him again.

"Trulsson, I thought you had a kindly disposition—"

"You rule with a tight hand in the cottage, mother, but no one can take our grace in bad part."

The wild lads ranged themselves along the wall and folded their hands.

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Surveying Mother Ingebritt with his tranquil eyes and dwelling on every word, he began with a strong voice: "Our Father—"

She plucked painfully at her apron, trembled, and tried to look away, but with his gentleness he forced her to meet his look, and every time she breathed more heavily. When he came at last to the words: "Give us each day our daily bread," she involuntarily interrupted him.

"No more!" she muttered.

"What? Shall I not recite the Lord's Prayer?"

"Not to-night. To-morrow we 'll recite it."

She caught him by the arm, and drew him with her into the entry. "You called me stingy and hard?" she inquired in a voice so remarkable that not her tongue but her very heart seemed to speak.

"I did."

"And you said that want such as this had come upon us to make us good and great?"

He nodded.

"Follow me, then!" she whispered, and they stepped out into the winter night.

The crust was so hard that it bore, and the stars flickered over the dark stretches, where no cattle lowed and no sheaf was set out for the sparrows. A thundering norther swept around the corners of the house. They pressed close along the walls of the cow-shed on account of the wind, and when they entered the wood, they held tight to the fir branches.

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Terror has robbed her of her wits, thought he, and he called after her through his hand, but in the storm she did not comprehend his words. She only peered in front of her and kept on walking. He mistrusted that she had no good purpose and began to be afraid, but he was ashamed to leave a woman alone in the night, for he knew that wolves are more plentiful after men have become fewer.

Chilled through with cold and uneasiness, he hastened his steps, so as to seize her around the waist and hold her back. Then he saw that they were come to an abandoned and dilapidated house, whose proprietors had died in the plague and their son on the battlefield. The granary had collapsed into the snow-drifts, and the snow whirled between the slats of the house porch. In the wide-open doorway the windows of the opposite wall glistened through the empty rooms. Overcome with dread, he stood still.

Leaning against the cottage wall stood a frightful apparition, a gigantic shape like to a man wrapped in gray furs and with a great pointed crown full of snow. Was it the peasant that had died of the pest, who had risen from his hastily shovelled grave to keep Christmas in the house where in the days of Charles XI of blessed memory he had so often bidden the loving-cups be filled and the hurdy-gurdies resound?

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Mother Ingebritt shook with apprehension, and pressing her hands to her eyes so as not to see, she sprang into the cottage.

The man's heart stood still, and he bent slowly forward toward the apparition. He saw that it was an elk, frozen to death. Led by the memory of other winter nights, when it had found shelter and radiating warmth by the same wall, it had leaned against the deserted dwelling, where no sleeper any longer breathed in the deep shutter-bed, and no embers glittered through the pane.

"God have mercy on you!" stammered Trulsson, and stepped into the room. "Not only men but even the beasts of the woods are perishing."

But Mother Ingebritt did not hear him. She had already lifted several boards from the floor, and in the pallid light of the snow had laid bare a chest, which was about half an arm's length across and two arm's lengths between the ends. The chest was painted blue with white scrolls and leaves, and it had handles of iron.

Mother Ingebritt dared not turn her back to the alcove and the empty shutter-bed, but always placed herself so that she had Trulsson close behind her. He still understood nothing, but when she grasped one handle, he grasped the other. Then, continually looking around them toward all the corners and recesses, they carried the chest out of the cottage and home toward the church. They set it down in

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the corridor of the church several paces within the porch.

"Go to the dwelling-house," said Mother Ingebritt, "and sit down at the table as host for my unbidden guests! I myself must stand by the chest and ponder much and hard, for when we gather here early to-morrow, it's I whom God will likely choose to hold the Christmas Service."

He obeyed her and went across the churchyard to the parsonage, but he thought that misfortune had quenched her understanding and that next morning he should have to conduct her to an asylum.

When it was morning, and the storm had abated, no bells rang as heretofore, and no well-to-do parishioners came up on pack-saddles over the unshovelled roads. From the mile-wide expanses of gloomy, dilapidated, and abandoned farmsteads was heard neither shout nor whip-crack. A couple of lonely torches shone between the trees, and a few women and infirm old men with crutches and canes assembled in the vestibule. Of other men there were none, and the church-goers were in all but twelve souls. The graves were more numerous than the mourners, and no Christmas Day had dawned amid deeper quiet.

They put out the torches under their snow-covered wooden shoes, and when they saw Mother Ingebritt sitting on the chest, but not a single can-

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dle lighted, they saluted hesitatingly and wonderingly. When she remained sitting with her chin in her hands without nodding or giving them a word, they felt that they hated her more bitterly than ever.

Gradually now the drowsy guests from the parsonage assembled, but no ringing was heard across the moors, because the steeple bells had long since been cast into a field-piece that lay disabled and silenced at the bottom of a bog in Ditmar. No pastor mounted to the pulpit. No sexton rapped with his tuning-fork, but the servant-girl who had long been performing his duties was already waiting at the doorway.

Then Mother Ingebritt arose and brushed the locks of hair from her forehead, but it was so dark in the church that she felt with her hand to steady herself against the pew-door. Neither the hanging candelabrum nor the baptizing font could be discerned, neither paintings nor panelling. Only the copper candlestick on the distant altar shone in the snow-light.

"Yesterday," said she, "we closed our prayer with the words: 'Give us this day our daily bread.'" Thereupon she added softly and quietly: "Forgive us our trespasses!"

At this moment a spectre-like, sallow little boy came to the church threshold with a burning torch. By its light she opened the chest and knelt before it on the flagstones of the graves.

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"Misfortune works wonders," she said, and it seemed to all in that dark Christmas Service that there was kindled over the corridor of the church a glow more bright than that from a hundred arches of the fairest wax candles.

Lifting out six silver cups and six silver spoons, she divided them evenly among the soldiers and their destitute fellows. She emptied out four big purses of fiat coins, and counted an equal number into each outstretched hand, so that none of those present was neglected, and in every apron she laid bread and salt and many finger-rings and other articles, until the chest was empty and the torch went out.

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Fredrikshall

THE governors of the provinces now called the people together and counted out on the table fifty dollars to every one who volunteered as a cavalryman and a hundred to every one who became a foot-soldier. Many refractory men hewed off their fingers or cut themselves with knives so as to be incapable of war service, but these were sentenced to thirty lashes or were set to hard labor for life at Marstrand. Bands of deserters went through the country, quartering themselves by violence. When the peasant heard their voices at the road gate, he left his keys in the lock and hid himself under the hay bales or fled to the wilds with his household and cattle. In Stockholm the councillors barred themselves in their rooms to keep from being seen and interrogated. Inspectors, accompanied by guardsmen, roamed from port to port and broke into cellars and larders, and wolves even ventured in on the streets. There were no goods in the shops, no grain in the mills, no hands that raised a hammer, no happy voices, no cozy winter evenings around the home firesides.

Then the whole people shuddered with a premonition. At the church doors or in the barred rooms it was said that God, who had set the crown of martyrdom upon them, would soon let the thorn-spikes fall away and the leaves bud in the

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green beauty of a new spring, and that the king would now die. Day by day, folk awaited the tidings that he had fallen, wondering only that they were delayed. All knew that he fought in single combat at gates and fences like the meanest soldier. Most people suspended their daily occupations, and went about in fear and gloomy expectation. An alderman in Stockholm was already lamenting that he did not know where they would get mourning cloth and money for the funeral. Even Görtz was lying sleepless one morning, when his servant came in with wood for the stove. Sweden was like the collapsing house of the king at Bender, but over this burning city of ruin, where the lamentation died away into waiting silence, glittering plans for the future harmony rose like meteors, of which distant prodigies the soothsayers foretold that only after hundreds of years would they be realized and understood.

At this time there lived at Uppsala a begging scholar, who wished to become a clergyman, but could never succeed in anything but gambling and fighting, or in making Swedish and Latin verses at weddings and funerals. His name was Tolle Orasson. His hands and feet had always been too slender and delicate for his large stature, and however much he starved, his beardless boy-face always bloomed equally round and pink. He did not want to harm any one, if only they let him live

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as free as a bird, go his own ways, and sleep in peace o' mornings; but his comrades opined that he could not distinguish between good and evil.

One fine Sunday, when the recruiters began their hubbub in the town, he all at once became thoroughly pious and stuck himself away in a pew with the empty covers of his Latin grammar. It was in the Church of the Trinity. In the midst of the service the recruiters pressed in, threatening and clamoring, with a bunch of handcuffs on their shoulders, but Tolle Orasson bent over his empty book-covers. He swayed back and forward, singing with such devotion and fervor that nobody thought of seizing him, although he belonged precisely to the useless students who, according to the royal proclamation, were to be taken out for the army.

From that moment, however, he found it most advisable to hang his wallet on his back and go on adventures. He gazed about him with terror in the dear land of his fathers, which war and pestilence had so ravaged and transformed. Was this Sweden, the realm his fathers had made and guarded as the apple of their eye, the mighty empire of the north, beloved and feared? On the roads he came upon lamenting peasants, who were forced to convey their grain by long journeys to the headquarters in Norway or as far up as the redoubt of Järpe in Jämtland. Overturned loads and dead horses lay on every slope. Up in the deserted forest region

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tattered vagabonds peeped from the cottage windows, and he always carried his money hidden in the leg of his boot. Lined up on the grass plots by the peasants' houses were settle-beds, wagons, and domestic animals, and amid weeping and shouting the thump of the auctioneer's mallet rang on the door-jamb. In the kitchens of the gentry the servants related that the master and mistress had buried their silver, because Görtz had commanded that not only all genuine money but also all utensils of precious metal should be delivered up in return for the fiat money, so that the king got the entire property of his subjects. Tolle Orasson found out that not even the princess at Stockholm had enough silver for her table, and that the king himself ate off of sheet iron. In the abandoned smithies, outside some of which the streams rushed unimpeded to the ocean past standing wheels and open sluice-gates, he spoke with the single remaining smith, who was too old and infirm for army life. There he came to know that, if any iron was forged, it had to be stored at once in the government warehouse against the payment of certain bags of fiat coin. For preference, however, he sat and warmed himself in the parsonages, where his Bible learning and Latin caused him to be well regarded, and the pastor would sometimes converse with him until daybreak. There it was whispered that there was a question of taking the appropri-

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ations for the school and the poor; yes, even the very bank; and that there were no pens and paper, but all official work had to be suspended, if the gentlemen were not willing to dip their fingers into the ink-horn and write on the bare table. One grizzled parson told him that the governors of the provinces had been deposed or put under supervisors, so that nobody knew any more which of them should command or obey. The old man described how he himself had had to pawn his Bible and surplice and pour small-beer into the Communion chalice.

After this fashion Tolle Orasson wandered from district to district, and sometimes earned a copper for conveying letters and official reports. The postmen, it seemed, had been ordered to the army, and the unruly innkeepers became postmasters. These did not understand their business, but mothers and orphans daily thronged about them in vain, crying for letters from their relatives in the wilds and mines of Siberia. In the midst of grumbling peasants in the church of Slätthög he got the privilege of running his fingers over one of the sultan's gold-embroidered coats of honor, which hung there as an altar-cloth. In the town of Kalmar he became sworn brother to Artillerist Edstedt, who had just married a servant-girl, but who himself was no man but a Miss Stolhammar in disguise. At Visingsö he diced with the ragged Russian prisoners; in Karlshamn he tussled

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with Polacks, Armenians, and Jews, and twitched the turban tassels of the solemn Turkish creditors. He even beguiled them into drinking wine, but thereupon shattered the defiled glass, so that the stone pavement resounded. In Lund he listened among the armed students to the rebellious talk of Professor Ihre, and shot at Professor Rydelius, who wanted to allay the tumult. After roaming half around the kingdom, he was finally standing one evening in Göteborg, where during his journey the king had been received as guest by the pirate Gatenhjelm in his house on Stigberg Square. Dusty and athirst, Tolle Orasson sat him down in Dorotea Ek's coffee house, where the loudly weeping and guffawing citizens embraced one another and related that the terrible Madagascar pirates were now to have permission to come with sixty richly laden privateers and settle in the city to improve trade conditions.

Then he could no longer keep his tongue between his teeth but let his light shine, relating the experiences and adventures of his journey both in Swedish and in Latin. Soon he noticed that two men, who had sat next him with the collars of their cloaks turned up, were themselves silent in order to listen to his talk, and this made him even more communicative.

"The Swedes are going to feel the iron glove as never before since heathen days," he said, survey-

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ing his shining nails. "The king has carried his sword against nation after nation, and now he is turning it against his own. Could it possibly end otherwise? But dark forebodings are being whispered about in the land. He leaves no son behind him. What indeed would such a man want with a son? In the councillors' desk there lies already the outline of an English constitution. Never shall we bear from another what we have now voluntarily endured. Perhaps to-morrow — perhaps this evening, while we converse here — a weary soldier is sitting before a heap of embers, melting lead in a casting-ladle. Perhaps at this very moment he holds in the bullet-shears the heavy drop that shall put to sleep forever the greatest among heroes."

A merchant, already weighed down by years, with the whitest of hair and the most melancholy eyes, tapped him on the hand.

"We human beings judge everything according to the pain in our own wounds, but now let an old man speak! Even if our hard, iron-souled king had never been born, our neighbors, who are ever growing stronger, would none the less have begun to dismember the Swedish Empire. Slowly, year by year and day by day, our children and children's children would have compromised and been humiliated and given up province after province. There would never have been quiet, and yet never glory either. It 's a stupid spectacle to see a bound lion

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whose blood drips away in little thimblefuls. So I 'd rather once for all see the flame in the clouds and a man in front of us. When did he order us to offer more than he has offered? Has n't he hungered, has n't he been cold? And now there spreads over us the foreboding that he shall also fall with us."

Tolle Orasson changed his tone. He did not wish to dissemble, but it became even more firmly fixed in his mind that the man who had spoken last was right.

"If I did n't value freedom and a good bed, I could steal away after the king to press my lips to his footprints in the Norwegian snow. Soon it may be too late and the bullet be cast—"

At the moment he uttered these words, the two men who had sat next him rose at a secret mutual sign, and his fear of a soldier's coat was so great that he grew pale, for he noticed shining brass buttons under their cloaks.

"My fine lad!" they cried at his ear, and led him out by both arms as a prisoner. "If you can talk so elegantly, it won't be much for you to stand near where the bullets whistle. We 've now got a fat bird on our twig. We are recruiters, we, monsieur! Do you understand? And now, march to Norway!"

"All my days I 've longed for nothing else than to become a warrior," he answered at once, with such a gentle and friendly firmness that even he himself

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believed his words. "Put your pretty recruiting penny in my hat!"

So at last he had to put on the blue coat for which he had entertained such fear, and every day he experienced new and unlooked-for adventures in the midst of the land where of old the plough had peacefully cut its furrow in the earth. Scarcely had he gone a short way beyond Strömstad, when he caught sight of great galleys on the dry ground. He himself was yoked to the bow with peasants and horses and oxen to drag the vessels two and a half miles farther over the promontory to Idefjord. Inch by inch the ship was pulled over corduroy roads and heaps of twigs; by night in the light of pine torches, and by day in the heat of the July sun. A little man in a coat of lilac satin and a bushy wig, with broad gold buckles on his shoes, went back and forth among the men to encourage them. It was Emanuel Swedenborg, for Polhem had commissioned him to execute this unusual task.

When he caught sight of Tolle Orasson, he shaded his weak eyes with his hand and said: "That fellow has the most robust and blooming health I 've seen in many years. My worthy corporals, don't go too hard with the man, for I see well that he has not full strength in his limbs!"

That was the first word of sympathy that Tolle Orasson had heard since he had clinked glasses with his comrades at Uppsala, and he was straightway

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impelled, with tears in his eyes, to stick out his chubby hand and beg.

"I am an unlucky wretch," he whispered in a mixture of Swedish and the most scholarly Latin, "and I shall bless and thank you for a single pinch of snuff."

"Snuff is one thing and serving the king is another," answered Swedenborg seriously, and went off. But the very same evening, when the relief was blown, he came up with his snuff-horn.

"Take the whole snuff-horn, keep it, and say no more about it!" he whispered, and was off again like a wanderer suddenly met on the road.

People are good, Tolle Orasson thought at once, and made an effort to come to himself in his loneliness. Soon, however, he used up the last copper he had saved and all the contents of the snuff-horn in bribing his way to an occasional extra hour's sleep in the morning. He was then immediately of the opinion that people were bad.

When the last ship, with her gilded god of victory at the prow, finally glided out over the dark waters of Idefjord, he was again ordered to march. Many foreign and native officers gradually united themselves to the band, and the long march of the country's last conscripts went from farm to farm.

One noon at a posting-station it happened that Tolle Orasson was sitting asleep behind a wagon-shed with his hat on his knee. When the drum

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rolled, and he awoke, a bright rix-dollar of hard money lay in his hat on a piece of folded paper.

It was an unexpected sight, and he rubbed his eyes and wondered whether he was dreaming. He smote the coin with his knuckle and weighed it in his hand. Finally he unfolded the paper and read:

"In Tistedahl by the miller's Cottage stands a weeping birch called the Candlestick, because it has three arms on one trunk. If His Royal Majesty falls before the Enemy's Shot, you will on that same night bear witness to the Wonder that a Purse with 50 Ducats lies in the earth close to the Candlestick."

"Some foreign devil has written that Swedish," burst out Tolle Orasson, almost wailing and moaning, as he tore the paper into little bits and strewed them about him. He put earth on them with his foot and trampled them down. Then he stuck the rix-dollar into his trousers pocket in order to go to the others, but hardly had he taken a couple of steps, before he snatched out the coin again, as if it had burned his body and clothing. He threw it far away from him into the bog.

When he had tied his baggage on his back, he began to march again with his usual boyish smile, as if much in the world was quite wonderful and yet of no consequence at all; but next night he dreamed about the white birch with the three uplifted arms.

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The wooded mountain ridges became ever more enveloped in clouds, the roads ever steeper, the sutler's pots ever emptier, but no hardships could take away the flesh from Tolle Orasson's round cheeks and limbs. The boots fell in pieces from his feet, and the regulation trousers, which had been cut out for a starving army, were so inadequate for him that he had to fasten them together at the belt with a string. His well-conditioned and shining forehead irritated his emaciated comrades so that they vowed to thrash him, but because he was also a head taller than any one else, no one finally dared come too near him.

Although he betrayed no sign, he brooded from morning to late at night over the strange writing. Why did evil men wish to choose just him as their tool? He could think of nothing else. When at last the dusty band marched in among the tents and brushwood huts of the headquarters at Tistedal, he came to a halt, and without any longer knowing what he did, pointed to a leafless weeping birch.

"The birch, there 's the birch! That 's the Candlestick! I 'm sure — it must be called that."

"Here you 're to be quiet and obey," returned the corporal, and stationed him directly in the line as fugleman to be inspected.

When the corporal thereupon gripped him by the arm, he felt that the sinews were soft and that the tall recruit swayed powerlessly in his grasp.

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"This fellow we 'd be better without," averred the corporal. "He 's all soft and tender."

. . . . . .

One November day several detachments of troops made a halt in a mountain pass, and though the clock only pointed to three, twilight prevailed. Tanned by the sun of the steppes, with a Turkish tobacco pouch at his breast, many a veteran officer wondered at the wintry realm into whose wooded wildernesses the army now marched to new adventures. Captured sharp-shooters told wild stories of trolls and shrieks of wood fays; and women with flaxen hair, as tall as men, came to the camp-fires by night and cut down the wearied and sleeping Swedes with their axes.

It was snowing, and far below the ravine the sun cast a yellow light over the stunted woods and overhanging crags of the mountain wall.

The army consisted of pallid fifteen-year-olds, of half-grown boys, who stood with their weapons in the drift.

The little West Gotlanders, with their sharp noses and shifting eyes, whispered to one another: "The king will probably say that, if we don't want to starve, we can dig food from the Norway mountains."

"We may as well dig, then," answered the Smålanders in mournful, long-drawn accents.

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The Dalecarlians and Bohuslanders propped themselves sullenly on their musket-barrels, but the battalions of Södermanland began to grumble. Then Colonel Rutger Fuchs reined up his horse and came to a stand before the front ranks. One foot was askew in the stirrup, for at Gadebusch, where he was carried from the field, his leg had been shattered by a bullet.

"For shame, you Söderman fellows!" he cried in his Scanian dialect. "If you don't get plums in your cake, you butter boys, you begin at once to grumble. I hear you are all down-hearted, but now it's your duty to bear up bravely, for I tell you that never again in time will Swedish men get to serve such a hero as our royal master, and gladly would I shed my blood for him. Look at me! What am I called? Come, out with it!"

"Rika Fuchs," answered all the soldiers with one mouth, and their expression brightened.

"That's correct. All my days I've been called Rika Fuchs. Well, now, where are Fuchs's riches? He who can step forward and answer gets two farthings."

No one dared to advance.

Then Rika Fuchs drew his pocket-book from his breast, opened it, and turned the leaves, while he kept up the following discourse:

"What the devil is this talk of being rich? It's a matter of book-keeping, lads. Do you think,

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maybe, that all property pays interest? Well, try it! Listen to what I read. Debts: nil. That 's the first half of Fuchs's riches. Here we have the departed Schlippenbach's dressing-down. Have you quite forgot the departed Schlippenbach, your former colonel, who bequeathed to me both his dressing-gown and his regiment, the two dearest possessions he had in this world? That dressing-gown is so precious to me that I should n't be willing to sell it for less than five thousand rix-dollars. It is therefore worth exactly that sum to me. Listen, furthermore! Assets:

The departed Schlippenbach's dressing-gown, five thousand rix-dollars.
The Södermanland regiment, ten thousand rix-dollars.
My beloved wife Greta at home, seventy thousand rix-dollars.
A cur from Holstein, a thousand rix-dollars.
My royal master's favor, eighty thousand rix-dollars.
The tavern, Golden Ass, two thousand rix-dollars.

Deuce take me if that is n't all reckoned too low, but then, too, it 's all I have in life. Well, what is the tavern of the Golden Ass, anyhow?"

"That 's the gracious colonel's sackcloth tent," murmured all the soldiers confusedly.

"Just so, right! At that tavern any one whoso-

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ever may breakfast gratis, for there is not a crumb to get. Now let us add! Total assets, one hundred and sixty-eight thousand rix-dollars. But as the nil for debts is the half of my riches, that half of my wealth must also then be a hundred and sixty-eight thousand rix-dollars, too. Accordingly and demonstrably, I have all together three hundred and thirty-six thousand rix-dollars. Look you, boys, that 's what Görtz calls finance; and such an art is useful to master, you understand. Do you but learn book-keeping and to set a right value on everything, and you 'll get to see that you are finely rich and don't need to hang your head, even if your belly cries out."

"Hurrah, hurrah for Rika Fuchs!" rang along the line. But at the same moment all swords flew from their scabbards, muskets were presented, and drums thundered. In the gleam of the mountain range strode forward the tall, magnified shadow of a limping man, with a round fur cap on his head and a gnarled stick in his hand.

It was the king.

He walked between the pines, followed by dragoons who came in a long line with broadswords drawn, leading their horses. He himself was first, and tramped the path in the snow. His scarred and compressed features had become darkened by sun and frost with the years, and between his eyebrows lay a deep furrow. When he stuck the fur cap under his arm and answered the salutes of the men

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in all directions, the snow fell on the bald crown of his head. Gradually the generals collected about him, and the guardsmen cut off a few fir boughs with their swords and spread them on the ground. The whole time he stood bare-headed in the snow-storm, and the grizzled wisps of hair brushed back along his temples were like a garland of frosted leaves. He ordered the soldiers to stack their muskets and light fires of branches, but the musicians were placed by the cliff-wall with orders to play until sunset.

"These Norway goats are a merry set to butt against," said the king. "Such men as their Kruse and Kolbjörnsen ought to be buried in gold coffins when they fall."

Field Marshal Mörner answered: "We have just captured some Norwegian spies who were lying hid in the bushes here to shoot Your Majesty. Shall we string them up?"

"No. Give each of them a ducat for his wasted time and tell them not to bungle in the soldiers' profession any more."

Mörner lowered his voice. "There are, besides, other more highly trusted bush-rangers. I have just got from Provost Brenner a new letter of accusation as to secret conspiracies against your crown and life. If one might believe him, there are dangerous enemies standing here even now scarcely five yards away."

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"They may stand, then, unless they choose to sit. War days are no time to investigate."

Mörner's dwarf, Luxemburg, now advanced with a water-flask. When the king had drunk, he handed the dwarf his juniper staff, which was worn shiny, as if to arm the little man, while he said to him: "A Turk predicted that I must beware of fools. You can try now whether I am afraid."

Luxemburg took the staff and made as if to twang it like a guitar, while he struck up a French love-song.

Mörner stepped near to the king, and whispered behind his hat, "The men are starving."

"A full soldier is slow at his duty."

"But a dead-hungry soldier drops his musket."

"If one melts snow, it becomes water. If one chews on a fir twig, hunger can be much dulled for a long while."

"The people we at least have under our eyes—but the brains at home—They say the parsons in the pulpits are openly calling down vengeance from heaven. They believe that, after God has smitten the Swedes and given a sign that their empire must be divided, Your Majesty is fighting solely for your own honor."

"Have their honor and mine become two separate things? They were insolent, and I answered. I will force them to hold out to the uttermost. Is it not as much for their own sakes as for mine?

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They say that I tempt God. I answer that I follow Him. That is my royal word! In the name of righteousness, that is my vow! Who is the arbiter?"

With these words the king put on the fur cap, turned up his cape-collar, and laid himself down calmly to sleep on the fir boughs, as if no enemy had existed in the world.

Dūker energetically shouted his commands to the officers. Mörner dozed as he stood leaning against a Scotch pine, without being able to listen further to little Cronstedt's quips; and the cunning Stjernroos, who had been out spying, came disguised in a sheepskin jacket and wooden shoes with a keg on his back. The king himself was already sleeping, motionless, without a thought of letters and menaces. He had entrusted himself to his soldiers.

But there were two eyes that followed him. Tolle Orasson, who on the preceding day had been assigned to the Södermanland regiment as corporal and leader of the wood-choppers, could not force himself to look away from the sleeper. The words of Rika Fuchs still lay in his heart.

I ought to keep an account book, too, maybe, he thought. Fifty ducats in the earth by the Candlestick Birch!

With his clear and friendly eyes he stared off at the king so fixedly that he did not notice how Rika Fuchs came close up to him.

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"What ails you?" said Fuchs, clapping him heartily on the shoulder. "Here 's a communication for Tistedal, since we are now to go up to the fortress of Fredriksten and open fire. Take two men along and a bundle of torches to light you — and run fast! A man with such a splendid food supply under his skin does n't need either to bivouac or eat oftener than every third night, if he only understands rightly how to husband God's gifts."

Tolle Orasson now betook himself off into the woods with two soldiers, but still when he was a long way off among the firs, he turned and looked at the king.

At daybreak, when he came to the village of Tistedal, he stood under the Candlestick Birch, and stuck the last torch into the earth with the burning end down.

"I have wandered about widely to study and teach," he said to the soldiers. "I have met both good and evil men. It may be, too, that beasts and trees can be good and evil. At every noon rest, when I 've been out with the wood-choppers, I 've laid me down to sleep here, but never got a wink of sleep. There 's a curse on this tree. Look! I 've driven an axe into one of the boughs up there. There will be a morning when I 'll set that axe to its root."

He remained standing while he surveyed the expiring torch.

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"Good and evil men, I said.—Never did I see a more glorious man than our great king, but the years make him ever stricter and harder. He has tenderness for the wailing of neither beast nor man. Even a cry of agony cannot induce him to turn his head. His winter is come, with its gradual death. How we should have wept for him, if he had chanced to fall in his youthful years! No age would have acclaimed a greater or purer name than his. See that torch, how slowly it 's dying, how it reeks and poisons the air with its stench of burning! Why not rather with a little motion of the hand press it deep down, quickly, without hesitation—so that it goes into the earth while it is still glowing brightly?"

The soldiers did not understand him, but merely answered, "May no evil befall our beloved lord and king!"

He took a couple of steps to follow them, but the Candlestick Birch spread its limbs above him imploringly, and he remained standing and talking to himself.

"Who is thinking of evil? Tolle Orasson takes his musket, he the despised, the outcast, who has had to go from farm to farm and beg for charity bread. He takes his musket and lays his finger on the trigger. That shot will call whole peoples to reconciliation. Even if all the cannon of Fredriksten thunder that night, no one will hear them. The

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soldiers will think that it 's as quiet as on a distant, frozen mountain lake. They will only hear the single shot. It will echo from night to night as long as men live on the earth. When I have dug up the fifty ducats, I will go forward to the generals, throw all the gold-pieces over their hats and wigs, and say: 'Bring out your handcuffs, good sirs! There 's drink money for your pains. Drink my health in real wine! It is I who have shot His Royal Majesty. Of you nobody will speak, but as long as *his* name lives, so long will mine live.' And so the handcuffs will be screwed on. I shall be set on the tumbrel and drive up the Götgata at Stockholm, but there will not be a window, a doorstep, a roof, that will not be black with eager folk who want to see Tolle Orasson. And at the gentlemen's houses where I've had to eat at the kitchen table, and at the parsonages where I've had to bow for a plate of beer-soup, it will be: 'In that chair Tolle Orasson sat, that was the pipe Tolle Orasson smoked, on that door-knob he held the finger that fired the shot.' The students of Uppsala, the proud, the false friends, who finally considered themselves too good to house me over a rainy night—they will become old, their heads will grow white, but they will never weary of saying: 'We knew Tolle Orasson, we called him by his first name.' So it will always be. As often as a coach drives into Stockholm Town, one gentleman will point through the window

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and say: 'There's the gallows!' There may be a hundred executed men in the graveyard, but he'll only say: 'There lies Tolle Orasson, the miserable wretch!' And then the other gentlemen will answer: 'The liberator of his people!'"

Tolle Orasson raised his arms to support himself, but at the same moment he laid his hand on the smooth, cold bark, he snatched it back with a suppressed cry of terror.

The soldiers stopped and turned around. He motioned them to go on and followed them, but he had grown as pale as a corpse.

. . . . . .

By a trench in front of the fortress on the mountain ridge the king had had built for himself a hut of boards; and thither a bed, table, and chair had been brought. No soldiers were posted with loaded muskets at the door, and the adjutant of the watch was often sent away on various errands. The king even overcame his former nervousness in the solitude of night and no longer allowed any page to sleep by his bed. Wearied by the exertions of the day, he sometimes slept on the rampart between the enemy's cannon and the soldiers working in the trench. Any one might have stolen out in the dark and extinguished his life with a sword-thrust. The sleepless and tortured nights in the Ukraine after the first crushing blows of adversity remained

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only as scars in the lines between his eyebrows. Had he not hardened his soul in misfortunes, as he had his body in privations? He never brooded a minute on danger, but he knew that its heavy cloud hung closer than ever above his head, and this filled him with the confident repose of his vanished youth. His voice had grown hard, but a masterful composure kindled its rejuvenating gleam in his eyes. All, all the gloom that misery and defeat concealed rose around him, and, propped on his juniper staff and often cursing impatiently, he directed the soldiers' work.

Occasionally he surveyed the heavens and searched out the constellations he knew, but when the mist had spread, and darkness fell deeper, he sometimes shut his eyes and counted on his fingers: "Three hundred, three hundred and eighty-five, ninety, ninety-four, four hundred thousand rix-dollars. Will Görtz really be able to collect as much by December? How, indeed, can the army be kept up otherwise? And would Görtz be able to get here within two days? Was it not his expected arrival that spread such unrest in the camp? What, though, is to be done about it now?"

The king knew no scruples, for he had become a highwayman who despised money and property. Had not the Swedes called him a madman and reached their hands toward his crown? Ah well, he forgave it them, since he had given them their an-

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swer, but he wanted to hold them together to the last, even if house and foundation should burn. Was not that the duty, was not that the divine mission, he had sworn in his soul to fulfil? It was no time now for ease-lovers, no matter who might prefer to be at home in a shutter-bed. And Görtz's proclamation, which let his royal name be flaunted under perjuries about peace and the good of his subjects? Where in his campaigns had he ever seen princes act otherwise in time of necessity? And yet had they not been called wise and good as long as they succeeded? When the storm was over, he would hold an inquiry and straighten things out. Severity he had commanded, never conscious dishonesty. The matter was now to conquer the fortress of Fredriksten, which, standing before him on the mountain ridge with its gray walls and pointed battlements, barred the road up to Norway. Had they not already taken the outwork of Gyldenlöw with sword in hand?

With sword in hand! He shut his eyes, as he used often to do when he was unseen, and softly repeated the words. "They think that I tempt Thee, O eternal, wondrous God, Holy Spirit, my delight, my joy, my refreshment! They ever say: 'Stand halfway up, where we stand, otherwise you are presumptuous; sit down when we grow weary, otherwise we shall no longer call you our Gideon.' Thou, who art the arbiter, before Thee I humble myself

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in my need—I, a contrite sinner. If I have gone astray on the earth, strike me down dead!"

"The king has gone to sleep at his post," said the soldiers, when they saw him with head sunk and hat pulled down.

He heard them, looked up, and answered: "Not yet."

On the first Sunday in Advent the king mounted his horse and rode down through the mist to the miller's cottage at Tistedal. He was heavy at heart, and to overcome his melancholy he sat on a bench by the fire and looked over his papers. They were petitions and old letters and cancelled accounts from as far back as his sojourn at Lund. His eyes at last paused at two half-sheets, which were fastened together with a brass pin and written full in his own almost illegible hand. He read:

Anthropologia Physica. The natural tendency of all living things is that which is called passion, or the enjoyment of pleasure. Pleasure is of two sorts, namely, corporeal or spiritual pleasure. That is called spiritual pleasure wherein the body may have no part. But that is called corporeal pleasure which the body feels alike with the soul. The three parts of the body are: the material structure, wherethrough the form of the body with its outer and inner parts is shaped; the liquid matter, which consists of the blood with what thereto appertains; and the material *spiritus*

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or breath, which is, as it were, the finest part of the material being, is the strength and life of the very blood, and receives life and feeling from the vital breath or soul, while it conveys this throughout the entire body. It also dies of itself, as soon as any body or limb dies. — The reason why the soul participates in both sorts of pleasure and that the body only feels the pleasures of the flesh is this: that life is in reality a property of the soul, which the body, being itself a dead essence, receives through the action of the spirit. — That which is commonly reckoned under the name of the five senses consists only in one, which is called feeling and is an effect of the spirit, and which (according to the nature of each and every one's bodily structure) exhibits itself in five sorts of ways. . . .

He rose from the bench and grasped the incoming Field Marshal Mörner by the belt. "If Mörner were not as bad a philosopher as he is a good economist, he should here get a hard nut to crack. No, don't read the writing — that is only some nonsense I put together one evening down at Lund. I always observe that when after an interval I see again a fabric of thought which I endeavored to build, I enjoy disguising myself as an enemy and storming my own redoubt myself. Does the pleasure of thought lie in the mere fighting?"

Mörner answered: "Your Majesty is a hard du-

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elist in learned disputations, and never do I hear my gracious lord so well spoken as in such combats, but I cannot offer my sword-point as could the departed Grothusen."

He unbuttoned his coat hastily, and handed the king several sealed letters. "Bethink, Your Majesty, that even the stupidest accusation *may* be true and *may* strike the scythe from the hand of Death for many years."

The king knew beforehand these communications in printed characters without signature, which blackened those nearest him and foretold a sudden death. The threat of death alarmed him no more than the whine of a bullet. Had he not since his very boyhood days wakened nearly every morning prepared to lie on the field among the fallen before dark? He threw the three letters into the fire unopened, one by one, and stood in the lowly miller's cottage as tranquil as if his last army of tired and starved youths had brought all the crowns of Europe with them on a baggage-wagon.

"Answer me frankly!" he said after a short silence. "On how many may I still depend? I don't mean in an engagement, but if everything goes against us?"

"Must I answer? Is it a command?"

"Yes. On how many may I still depend?"

"On none."

The drums rumbled in front of the cottage, where

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the soldiers were marching up for divine service, and Hultman, entering, said, "I have to inform you humbly that morning service is now to begin. The text for the day treats of our Lord Jesus Christ's entry into Jerusalem."

The king now washed off all the grime from his face and hands, besides which he put on brand-new clothes of blue broadcloth and new yellow gloves of elk-skin. While his hair was powdered by Hultman so that it became white as an old man's, he supported one foot on the wood in the fire and said very softly, as if mainly to himself: "That text is very dear to me. — But the people spread out their garments on the way, and others cut branches of trees and strewed them in the way. And the people, both they which went before him and they which followed after, cried out, saying, Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

"Yes, yes, most gracious lord," answered Hultman almost in a whisper. "So, too, will the saints cry whenever a righteous hero of God rides into the heavenly Salem."

The king then turned from the fire and went out to the troops. With bared head he took his place under the Candlestick Birch. The soldiers, who were accustomed to love his juniper staff and stained uniform, hardly recognized him.

He spent all day in the camp, and only after

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evensong, when the mist began to descend, did he ride his horse, Engländer, up the woody ridge to the hut of boards by the trenches.

Tolle Orasson and his soldiers worked in the outermost trench. Commanded by the Frenchman Maigret, the Swedes crawled forward with their spades, rolling fagots and gabions in front of them step by step as a protection against the shot from the fortress. The echo of the enemy's firing thundered in the mountain like the clatter of bolts and bars, like the blows of clubs upon iron doors to subterranean dungeons and vaults.

In order to direct their fire and protect themselves against surprise, the garrison set out long stakes with burning hoops of pitch, and the fire-balls that were hurled about cast their sudden light over the crags. Fire and smoke spurted from the battlements of Fredriksten, and above the turf-covered Swedish rampart Tolle Orasson recognized the king's large hat and small head.

Hidden in shadow down in the trench, he pulled a fallen comrade's musket to him and, stooping, went back for some distance toward the rampart of earth. Only when he had come so near that he heard the king's words to the officers who stood in the ditch on the other side of the rampart, did he make a standstill.

Wonderful! he thought. Here in the approaches many soldiers fall nearly every night. Whence, then,

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comes the power to compel hundreds of men to stand and fall here without daring to shout to one another the simple three words — We won't obey?

He wanted to kneel and pray heaven for forgiveness and to persuade himself that his deed was righteous, but he could not. He did not know what he himself wished, and if a child had called to him to throw down the musket, he would have obeyed and commended the advice. But no one addressed him, and no one saw him, so that he feared only to delay, to prolong his own anxious uncertainty. He cocked the musket. He laid it to his eye. He sighted at the man for whom he had seen his countrymen fall and bleed submissively — but his finger lay trembling and paralyzed on the trigger.

Steps approached. It was the gray-haired Hultman, who in buckle shoes and white stockings, his hat respectfully stuck under his arm, was coming over the rocks amid the whistling bullets. In front of him he bore, covered with a napkin, the pewter bowl which contained the king's supper. As soon as he had come up to the rampart, he spread the napkin over his hat and then placed the bowl on top while he offered it to the king, who ate standing and every now and then took his faithful servant by the coat buttons.

Tolle Orasson lowered his musket and heard him say, "Hultman is beginning to get as stiff in his gait as Brandklipparen was in his last days. But

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no one has more faithfully followed me wherever I went, and therefore I nominate him to the place of chief cook. With the years we get ever further away from the good men of old times."

"God, merciful God!" muttered Tolle Orasson, swaying back and forth with his musket in his grasp.

He saw how Hultman went his way again through the rain of shot, and the king leaned over the rampart with his chin supported on his left hand. The moon, which was at the full, now rose large and bright above the pine woods.

Nearby Swedish, German, Italian, and French officers conversed in their various languages, planning how they might be able to lure the king down from his exposed position. Maigret, who had also joined them by now, plucked him gently by the cloak and said: "This is no place for Your Majesty. Canister and musket-balls have no more respect for a king than for the meanest soldier."

Then Tolle Orasson once more lifted his musket in both hands.

He threw it on the ground so that it went off, and the report was lost in the crash of the enemy's fire.

"Never," he stammered, "never! A Swedish-born man can never do it, though fifty ducats awaited him under every birch in Norway. Better desert or fall one's self. What do I care for the duc-

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ats? It was his *life* I wanted to take—and I can't do it. I should never be able to do it, until I shut my eyes. Isn't there any foreign marksman that can shoot a king blindfold?"

Tolle Orasson did not notice that the moon was already shining into the trench and threw his own shadow with its thin limbs and smiling boy's cheeks high up on the slope of the rampart.

"What are you doing here, my lad?" asked the king. "Go forward, straight forward toward the enemy!"

Tolle Orasson gave a start, turned on his heel, and began to march ahead toward the fortress. Behind him he heard the officers still urging the king to step down.

The king answered, "Have no fear!"

Then, without knowing any more what he was doing, Tolle Orasson grasped the crown of his hat and began to leap over gabions and fagots straight onward toward the enemy, always onward. Many Swedish soldiers, who saw him, rose to follow and desert. He stood and struck at them with his hand, and every time he turned, he recognized the king on the rampart. Why did he never take a spade and start to dig? That, to be sure, was what the king had meant. Instead he ran ever more violently and blindly, and at last he no longer knew whether he did so out of obedience or to desert. He took shelter behind stumps and in clefts, but he kept always

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getting nearer to the fortress. His soft limbs already bled from three wounds, yet he did not heed the warm drops that ran down under his glove, but recited prayers and psalms, calling himself an evil-doer eternally lost, who had been meditating a way to sell his soul.

He came to a shattered outwork of small size, which seemed to be abandoned; but when he heard voices of Norwegian soldiers, he hid himself in among the gabions.

A few paces from him, on splintered wheels, stood a field-piece, red-brown with rust, which was aimed at the king's rampart. It was loaded with gravel and old iron slugs. In it were corroded musket-balls, which a hundred years back a drunken pirate had shaped in his bullet-scissors, while he hummed a bawdy song for his trollop. In it were twisted keys and nails, which had long since fallen from a peasant's barn, and farthest inside lay a bent clapper, which had once rung in a cowbell on the sunny mountain top to the call of the milk-maids.

Long, broken clouds hurried white across the moon, and Tolle Orasson lay in among the gabions, bleeding and with folded hands.

"This is a night," he stammered, "when heaven stands wide open, and God surveys the earth with such deep thoughts that men feel His gaze. They may flee away, they may hide themselves, they may

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be wretches such as I or leaders of armies, yet they perceive His glance. A hero—what is a hero? He is constancy to the end; constancy toward adversaries, toward friends. But Thou there above, Thou art the avenger both of Thyself and of men; and when the hour-glass of Thy mercy is run out, Thou raisest Thy finger in omnipotence, and the hero bows his head to the earth—and lies reconciled."

Tolle Orasson bent aside the withes of the nearest gabion and heard the Norwegian corporal talk with the soldiers.

"Boys, there 's no use wasting men and artillery on this entrenchment; but seeing the old field-piece is too rickety to be dragged hence, the commandant has ordered me to fire it before we go. The shot may very well do the Swedes some harm still, if the gun does n't burst all to bits."

While he spoke, he carefully laid the slow-match on the field-piece, and, followed by his men, turned thereupon to the fortress with brisk steps—and singing.

Tolle Orasson followed the yellowish flame of the match with his eye, as it coiled ever nearer to the touch-hole. He thrust aside fagots and sacks of earth to burst his way through and pluck away the match, and he spoke aloud as if to the night: "I wanted to kill the man—and now I want to save him, only because I have just seen him and heard him speak. It 's so, then, that he makes us all his

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servants with a look. My wit is going out, and I can think no more."

He hewed apart the withes with his clenched hand, but the palisade barred him out, and all the time he saw the flame at the touch-hole. Sometimes it dwindled away and was nearly blown out, but then it leaped up again, bright and large.

That was a sign, Tolle Orasson thought, that men should try no more to act that night, and he stepped down into the clefts that descended toward the valley and the black chimneys of the burned town of Fredrikshall. Even at that distance he saw the flame. It burned bright for a long time over among the gabions, but he went down still deeper behind the rocks. Then he heard the crash of the shot, and the cliff trembled.

His strength was exhausted, and his understanding was befogged. He no longer remembered why he had gone toward the enemy. He only feared darkly that he might be seen and seized. He stared up into the night, where the thunders of the fortress rolled over the peaks like the chariots of Thor.

He did not know how long he tottered about among juniper bushes, nor did he know where he went. At last he perceived the tread of heavy, iron-shod boots, and heard gravel and stones rattle. Twelve soldiers of the guard were coming down the steep slope with a litter.

He kept quiet behind the junipers and waited.

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On the litter lay a fallen man, enveloped in two plain soldiers' cloaks and with a white curled peruke pulled down over the face under the braided hat, which was pressed down over the forehead.

"Who is it that has fallen?" he whispered, so low that Colonel Carlberg, who supported the tilting side of the litter from in front, noticed nothing.

"The colonel says it's a gallant officer," answered the nearest bearer, but as in so doing he turned his head to look at the solitary night-rover, he stumbled and sank on his knees under the burden.

The borrowed peruke and hat slipped from the dead man's head, so that the moonlight fell bright on the face with the temple shot through.

"The king! Our great beloved king!" the bearers murmured; and were about to set down the litter.

The dreaded monarch, to whom it had just been whispered that he could no longer rely on any one, lay there disarmed; and old warriors, stained with mud and grime, twisted their rough, frost-bitten hands over his corpse, wailing and groaning: "Our great, our beloved king!"

The colonel had to threaten them with hard words that they must be silent and not betray what had happened by their lamenting.

Heavily and slowly they bore the king onward again upon the same unplaned bier where during

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the previous nights he had seen so many nameless soldiers, already forgotten, who had obeyed his will and died.

Midnight was already past when the bier was set down on an open sward among the cottages in the lonely village of Tistedal. After the bearers had got three fiat coins for drink-money, they all went off. The officer remained and sat down, brooding and sighing deeply, on the single pole of the bier. Volleys still rang in the distance on the wooded ridge, but elsewhere all was hushed, and the mill-wheel down by the river stood motionless. All the panes were dark, and the same full moon that had lighted the disguised horseman through the city gate of Stralsund and to the dismal conflict at Rügen shone to-night over the grass where a lonely warrior kept watch by his fallen king.

Step by step, Tolle Orasson had stolen after and had only come to a standstill close by the sward under the motionless, drooping branches of the Candlestick Birch. Talking to himself half aloud, he went around the white trunk in ever narrowing circles, shaking over the tussocks the big drops from his wounded arm, in order to conjure into eternal sleep and oblivion the evil ducats that lay buried there.

"Sleep and be accursed! — Why don't the drums beat? The bier stands off there so lonely. No women are weeping there, no children, no faithful

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friends. Ah! you moon, that have come and gone and beheld so much, never shall I see you above a Swedish forest without remembering that bier."

He pulled out the axe which was stuck in one of the branches and which he had pointed out to the soldiers several evenings before. Chips of wood pattered down, and his strokes on the Candlestick Birch resounded far through the stillness.

With that he checked his hand again, and a new glimmer of comprehension passed through his soul: "Almighty, avenging God! He before whom assassins threw down their weapons, he who went smiling to meet innumerable deaths,—he falls as quietly as a trampled ear of grain, when Thou hast filled the measure of his fate. He falls nearly in solitude one night on the ramparts, like a petty soldier at his post. He dies by a shot from a condemned and rusty field-piece, on which a few soldiers, indifferent and singing, have thrown their match. Or—whence, forsooth, did the bullet come at Thy bidding? What do I know, a simple man? I only know what I have just now witnessed and therefore must believe. But there were so many strange voices up there in the dark."

All this time the officer sat on the pole of the bier by the dead man wrapped in the soldiers' cloaks, and ever more wearily in the repose of night the axe-blows fell on the thick trunk of the birch.

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When the tree finally plunged to earth, the unknown wood-chopper sat down in silence on the trunk.

The hours grew long. It was already getting toward morning, when a couple of servants, who had been sent for him, drew near to carry back their fallen lord. Between them with the king's sword walked a captain, who related that in the moment of death the hand had clasped the hilt so vehemently that the blade was half drawn from its sheath.

Listening to every word, Tolle Orasson bent aside the branches of the Candlestick Birch.

"The sword—" he asked of himself. "Was there a hardened man, a man prematurely gray, who drew that sword against the memory of the prince of light who once bore his name? Or may—"

He stepped forward straight in the captain's way and inquired in a suppressed whisper: "The sword—against whom was the sword drawn? Under my blood-covered corporal's clothes there is a like man, one perhaps cleverer than ye, though sunken deep from the sight of men. Don't motion me away, then, but answer in pity's name!"

"My friend, I don't understand your question."

"Against whom, I say? Against whom was the sword drawn?—I know it myself now. Against whom, do I ask? Against all. Is n't that answer

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enough for us? Is n't it so that a hero must die? He believed in the righteousness of his own conduct. — Such defiance God forgives. — Such defiance even men forgive."

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Capture Görtz!

TO capture Görtz was to beat a fox at his own game, but the Prince of Hesse had at headquarters an incomparable lackey by the name of Pihlgren, who afterwards in his old age used to relate how it came about. Many years after Pihlgren's pious and altogether edifying death, an old manuscript was preserved in one of the parsonages of Värmland, where it was all recorded and described. Nobody rightly knew whence the manuscript had come, but the dean, who had read the yellowed sheets carefully, used to tell it as follows:

The night when the king was shot, the Prince of Hesse sat at table with several officers at Torpum. Then the Frenchman, Siquier, stepped in and whispered into the prince's ear, and the prince whispered into the ear of the man who sat next him. When the whisper had gone round, the prince dropped his knife and fork. He then ordered up a horse and a lackey. Pihlgren, who was on guard at the house of the prince that night, packed his cloak in his saddle-bag with great haste and rode behind the prince and the officers to the trench where the king lay fallen.

The litter had just been fetched, and the prince ordered the officers to lift their glorious master upon it, but the incomparable hero had seized the broad-

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sword-hilt so hard in the instant of death that the generals had great difficulty in unclasping his fingers. When the Swedish gentlemen had finally disarmed the great dead and gotten away the sword which he let go so reluctantly, his hand clung a long while to theirs, and all who stood near believed that in that hour God Himself had sealed the handclasp forever.

As soon, now, as the litter was carried away, the prince summoned the officers to a council of war on the spot where the king had fallen, and thirty soldiers with torches stood round about at a little distance.

Bomgarten, who was colonel of the Nobles' Regiment as well as a chamberlain, finally went aside with Lieutenant-Colonel Björnschiöld, while all the time he gazed furtively at Pihlgren. Thereupon Björnschiöld came to Pihlgren and praised his clever understanding and many accomplishments, as he requested him in the prince's name to come with him on a long ride, concerning which he would get instructions only when they were well on the way.

Pihlgren became quite at a loss, but as he rode in company with Bomgarten and Björnschiöld next morning, they said to him: "Now we 're off to capture Görtz."

"In that case," said Pihlgren, "we must needs

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be nimble both with tongue and hand; but for my share, I shall do my duty faithfully, as the gentlemen surely know. Where, then, is the sinner?"

They said, "He is supposed to be not far off, but if he reaches Tistedal, he 'll be the cause of a pretty spectacle."

When they had travelled the roads another night and day, at five o'clock in the dusk they met Görtz, as he came riding in his red cloak on the plain at Raballse.

When Pihlgren pointed to the plain, Bomgarten and Björnschiöld ridiculed him, crying gaily at his ear, "Do you think the great man would be on horseback?"

But Pihlgren answered, "Dèvil take me if it is n't Görtz. I recognize for sure his servant Petter Berg, who is riding by him, and is my honest old friend and crony."

When they had come nearer and noted that Pihlgren spoke the truth, Bomgarten dismounted and greeted His Excellency very humbly, while he assured him that His Majesty had never been better than he was at that moment.

"And whither do you mean to turn now?" asked Görtz.

Bomgarten, who hated Görtz for all the evil he had done him, bowed lower and lower with great cheerfulness, so that he scraped the road with the

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hat in his hand, and then he made up a handy lie. "I 'm journeying to Göteborg to buy boots for my regiment," he said.

Görtz now turned to Björnschiöld, whose German wife was a relative of his: "And you, cousin?"

Björnschiöld grew red in the forehead and bravely grasped at the first lie that came to hand: "Oh, I 'm going to Göteborg about a stranded ship on which the prince has effects."

Bomgarten now began again to bow and scrape and be so glad that his eyes shone, and with that he contrived a new fib: "The remarkable thing is, that just now we 've got to turn back. But we must get us fresh horses first at Raballse. Perhaps there 's a question of some assault. The prince has sent this foolish lackey here after us and ordered us to return."

When he had spoken after this fashion, he gave a wink to Pihlgren, whom in his heart he considered a fellow as honest as he was sharp, a man worth more than ten others. Had the colonel not had such an artful lackey with him, Görtz would perhaps have gone free to this day; and who can tell whether that denier of God, who was so much at home both in the black arts and every sort of forbidden thing, would not then have known how to lengthen his worthless and sinful existence so that he neither grew feeble with years nor departed this life? It was therefore surely by God's dispensation

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that Pihlgren was on the alert, though the reward he got afterwards was ingratitude.

Because Pihlgren was a crony of Petter Berg's, he came near to riding forward and honorably betraying the whole plot, but in a short time he began to hear so many untruths that he had to smile within himself, and soon he grew as crazy as the others.

They dared not seize Görtz out of hand in the open, but he inquired of them with much affability, "Where do you think to make your quarters for the night? Will you not come on to the deanery at Tanum and eat supper with me?"

That was water to their mill, and they accepted with feigned gratitude, pressing their hands to their breasts, but between themselves they thought that they would be the guests who knew how to get the tidbits of the goose.

Görtz now rode forward to the deanery at Tanum, but a cornet and an adjutant followed him stealthily at a distance to observe if he kept the road he had said and did not turn off toward Glomm, for in that case they were to shoot a bullet through his head. Bomgarten and Björnschiöld rejoiced meanwhile at the good turn the affair had taken, notwithstanding that they could not get any fresh horses at the hostelry in Raballse, since they were all bespoken to carry Görtz's heavy baggage. Only Pihlgren adroitly managed to find himself a horse that had

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stood in the stall for three days. The fact was, he accosted a servant-girl and stationed himself as if he wanted to entice her round the corner of the house to chat with her. When, unable to withstand such an invitation, she followed him out into the rain, he became quite serious all at once and promised her a pretty penny if she could immediately find him a rested horse.

Bomgarten and Björnschiöld were sorely amazed when they saw Pihlgren come leading along a white-faced nag, which was so lively that it reared and snorted; but they were now so tired out that they straightway ordered Pihlgren to gallop off ahead to the deanery and there in all secrecy beg the dean for a room with a fire on the hearth and a light on the table.

It was cold, and a pouring rain fell all night. When Pihlgren came to the deanery where Görtz had taken quarters, he happened on the cornet and the adjutant, who were keeping out of sight in the dark wagon-shed. They could not believe their own eyes when they saw his steed, which was so frisky that they could hardly hold him, and they praised Pihlgren, rejoicing to have with them such a clever lackey.

There was a long delay before the others came up with their hard-ridden beasts. Silently they fastened all the horses in the wagon-shed, so that no one in the house might discover them. Light shone

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at all of the windows, but deep darkness prevailed outside, and before they went up to the room which Pihlgren had, with much foresight, engaged in a side-building, they each and all got ready their pistols.

They were wet through to the skin, but were so much excited that they did not notice it. When they entered the room, whispering and walking softly, Bomgarten said to the dean, "Our errand here is that we wish to arrest Görtz, because King Charles has just been shot dead."

The dean, a small, slender man with a most cheerful countenance and thin white hair, took a turn across the floor, which was covered with fir twigs, stroking and shifting his skull-cap: "God bless you, colonel," said he, "if you will cut short the power and authority of this wicked plague of our country. He is an Achitophel, and who knows whether the devil himself, imitating in mockery an exalted model, has not taken human form in his person, and so is sitting and eating this evening in my own humble dwelling? Ever since that abandoned villain came riding through the rain, the kitchen fire blazes and roars so that the sparks come out of the chimney, and yet it's as if the flame could not warm one's forehead, but was always cold as ice."

Bomgarten then answered, "Be easy, my good dean! You must now station your servants under

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the window with axes, and then Pihlgren, who is a more cunning fellow than all of us put together, will quietly entice Görtz's servants in here, one by one, till we have them all under lock and key."

Pihlgren then went softly out and found in a shed his old friend and crony, Petter Berg, whom he requested to follow him and take a secret letter to the little Duke of Holstein. Berg, who had some business in the shed regarding the many flasks that Görtz had brought along, offered Pihlgren a glass of good wine and thanked him for his true and faithful friendship from ever since they were little. But when Berg came into the room and saw the cornet and adjutant at the door with pistols and naked swords, he began to weep and exclaim, "Never should I have believed such a thing of Pihlgren."

Meanwhile Bomgarten inspected Berg's pockets and found a hundred ducats in specie, but when the poor fellow assured him it was only drink-money that he had received when he served with Feif and carried letters of appointment, he was allowed to keep them in return for confessing whatever else he knew.

"Well," he then related very softly and charily, "there 's really both French and Hungarian wine in some of the flasks in the shed, but the others are filled with Görtz's chinking money."

With that the dean stopped short in the middle

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of the floor, and smote his hands together, while Bomgarten, rapping and drumming on the corner of the table, shook his head and never ceased exclaiming, "We 're making a better haul here than we ever could have dreamed."

Pihlgren now returned into the dark to catch more fish with the same lie that he had just used, and soon all Görtz's lackeys were shut up in the room, with the exception of the valet, who was in with his master. Pihlgren found him the hardest to get on his lime-twig, but he relied on his skill and stationed himself before the kitchen window, which faced the courtyard.

It was raining in torrents, and he saw that the girl who was cooking Görtz's dinner shifted the saucepans back and forth over the fire without ever getting the strongest flames to heat as they should. By great good fortune the valet soon came out into the kitchen, but as he was mightily haughty in all his ways, Pihlgren understood well how to handle him, and went no further forward than to the open kitchen door.

"My good sir," he began, bowing, "I would humbly ask whether you will be so gracious as to follow me across the court and speak a few words with Colonel Bomgarten?"

"Why, it's raining," said the valet.

Pihlgren now no longer knew what device he should trump up, but stood out in the deluge and

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stared. "My good sir," he said at last, "it's surely something about His Excellency's flasks."

Thereupon the valet at once made haste to follow him across the court, but when he came to the room and saw the naked swords, he wished to turn. He burst out in wrath at Pihlgren, but the latter, now no longer using the words "my good sir," went close up to him and said, "Be quiet, will you? I 'm a remarkably honest man, and perhaps a finer, a better, a braver — perhaps, too, a smarter — yes, a better servant has never waited on a master. That 's enough!"

"A bragging groom, that 's what you are," retorted the valet.

"Yes, the varlet is insufferable," the dean said of Pihlgren.

But Pihlgren had not meant to boast, but had only said that of himself which was right and fair, and Bomgarten, who had seen what he was worth, struck the valet on the mouth with the back of his hand, and said aloud so that all heard it: "Pihlgren is a much stauncher fellow than you, and if you don't keep good and still, I'll beat you to a jelly. — And now, worthy sirs, keep good watch and ward over these chaps, so that they don't slip out, while we others get to business!"

Thereupon Pihlgren followed Bomgarten and Björnschiöld across the court, and they saw that

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the light shone in the dean's apartments, where Görtz was sitting alone. A blue cloth was hung in the window. The candle-light fell steady and quiet, and no shadow moved on the cloth. The whole deanery lay as still as if it were already late at night, and the only sound was a subdued clatter, when the maid now and then shifted the pans above the heatless flames.

Pihlgren thought of the many remarkable adventures which he had shared in his time, and it seemed to him that this last was the most noteworthy of all. Only now did he feel that his clothes were wet through, and all warmth departed from his body so suddenly that he began to freeze, and his teeth chattered.

When they came into the entry, they stuck their swords in the sheath and in that fashion went in to Görtz.

"Good evening!" began Bomgarten.

Görtz, who sat deep in thought with his spectacles on, only moved his large nightcap without lifting it off. There was a fire on the hearth, and on the table burned two white wax candles.

Bomgarten stood in front of him in the middle of the floor. "I order His Excellency, the privy councillor, under arrest!"

"Whom? me?—Indeed!"

Görtz's very fair and delicate countenance

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changed hue, he snapped his fingers, and moved his lips: "King Charles is dead! Does the king still live?"

Bomgarten answered, "When I last spoke with him, he lived."

But Görtz, who was no less crafty than Pihlgren himself, stuck to his inquiry and asked: "Did you see him?" To this Bomgarten replied: "I saw him as recently as when he sat, shy and embarrassed in times of good fortune, in conquered Thorn with his hat in his hand."

"I mean," said Görtz, "when did you see him last?"

To which Bomgarten replied, "In the dusk of misfortune, when he never took off his hat except before his hungry army or at divine service."

Görtz then cried, full of foreboding: "The king of the Swedes is dead."

Bomgarten stepped forward to the table, tied together a large red handkerchief full of documents, which Görtz had just been reading, and handed it to Pihlgren at the door. Björnschiöld, meanwhile, was seeking for Görtz's sword, which he found at last behind him on the bench where he sat and gave to Pihlgren. It was a sword with a large infantry hilt of pure ducat gold.

As soon now as Görtz had risen from the bench, Bomgarten began to examine his clothes to see if he had any papers, any vials of poison, or any

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sleeping-powder for the watch, because he was of opinion that such a bird would need to be caged with great precaution, if it was not to fly straight off again. He turned his breeches pockets inside out, but found nothing except a gold penknife case, an antiquated dollar in specie, and one and a half ducats. But when Görtz came to the fireplace, he suddenly tore a document from under his clothes and threw it on the fire, where it would at once have become ashes, had not Pihlgren plucked it from the embers with such haste that he burned his fingers.

"Stop, fellow!" thundered Bomgarten, seizing Görtz by the shoulder. "You are no longer he whom you have been. You were my worst persecutor in the realm of Sweden, but now I am your master."

Görtz, as he came to hear so many unaccustomed compliments, bit his teeth, changed color many times, and looked straight at Bomgarten with his single eye. The dean, who was host in the house, then came to the threshold and, touched by the transformation he beheld, addressed Görtz in a mild voice: "Your Excellency is a denier of God and cares far more for the heathen philosophers than for the unhappy Swedes, whose souls may be likened to a sword laid on an open Bible. But in the hour of misfortune it becomes every servant of the church to offer his consolation."

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Görtz now straightened himself up to his full height and stood proudly, as he said, "If I do not believe in God, yet I believe both in the Bible and the sword. Ye rancorous and simple-witted Swedes, little do ye understand what I believe or do not believe."

The dean said: "Your Excellency has built on the favor of his earthly prince."

Görtz replied: "He who lived in a strange country far from your absurdities has honored me with his favor. If you would preach, my worthy dean, pray wait until Sunday! Man is in life a bubble, in death food for worms."

"Then I have nothing further to say," declared the dean, "but will only inquire whether Your Excellency graciously commands that dinner shall be brought in."

Bomgarten interposed and answered curtly in Görtz's stead: "Yes; I am right hungry. Have the dinner brought in at once!"

When the dishes, which might well have beseemed the greatest king, had been laid on the board, Bomgarten and Björnschiöld sat down to table with Görtz, but, not venturing to let him use a knife, they cut his food for him on his plate. The word "Excellency," which had been used in the plain at Raballse, had been forgotten, and Bomgarten inquired: "The privy councillor has perhaps some wine with him, too?"

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Görtz became wholly dismayed: "Wine! Yes. Both red and white. Both—yes."

Bomgarten whispered to Pihlgren in Finnish, which no one else understood, that he should fetch in a couple of flasks of wine and likewise flasks with Görtz's money, but aloud he said: "Fetch in red wine and white. A glass of Volnay will taste splendidly—and then a little golden with our sweetmeats."

The dean and Pihlgren now helped to lift in the heavy and odd-looking flasks. They set them on the floor by the table, and Bomgarten beckoned to Pihlgren, "My good Pihlgren, be sure to give me a good glass of wine, because I surely need it, and have surely deserved it, too, most particularly to-day. And you shall take a glass yourself as well, comrade, for without you I hardly know how things would have gone."

Görtz, who sat at the end of the table without knife or fork, could touch nothing, although the best tidbits had been cut up on his plate. Then Bomgarten again beckoned Pihlgren from the door. "My good Pihlgren, come here with you, sit down, and eat. You are probably as hungry as I, and I know you have n't had a blessed bite since Torpum. Let 's see. *Petit-salé à la choucroute*—does n't that fall in with monsieur's taste? Or a piece of capon? Or a prune tart? Oh, that 's excellent. A regular little French *souper* for starved lads such as

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we. Not for two years have I eaten as well. Dear me, don't stand there scraping and shilly-shallying!"

"I must very humbly decline such an immense honor," answered Pihlgren, who saw that Bomgarten spoke in that way only to humiliate the haughty Görtz yet further. "To boast or to make much of myself is not at all in my mind, but the colonel surely knows that in a question of behaviour and knowing his place, there is no lackey in all the army — no, not in the whole of Sweden — no, not in . . ."

"Hold your gabble, you arch-prater, and sit down!" yelled Bomgarten.

When Pihlgren, too, was treated in such a fashion, he found nothing else for it than to obey, but he smiled contentedly in spirit, for he had often before in his time waited upon Görtz and never had he dreamed that he himself would come to sit at table with such a potentate.

On account of his cousinship, Björnschiöld at the beginning was somewhat abashed and silent, but as none of them had had anything to eat for two whole days, they ate as much as they needed of the delicate fare, and straightway drank to their hearts' content. Görtz said not a single word, but stared at Pihlgren, who had tied a cloth about his injured hand. However, Pihlgren was little inconvenienced and knew very well how to manage knife and fork and how to hold his glass.

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At last Bomgarten gave around the sweetmeats, and Görtz took two or three pieces, one of which he dropped in a glass of Hungarian wine which stood before him; but when he took the morsel into his mouth, he had to lay it on the plate again. He thereupon drank half the glass. That was all he consumed that evening.

Bomgarten then got Pihlgren to open the heaviest of the flasks and took it in his hands. "My dearest sirs," he said, "we must not forget now at the conclusion to thank the privy councillor for this capital French meal. This which I have here is a heavy wine that gives a big appetite and easily goes to the head, but in our impoverished and unfortunate land it is now unusually rare, and is reputed to be assuredly the favorite drink and daily medicine of our privy councillor."

While he spoke in this strain, he began to tilt the flagon, and all the bright ducats ran down into the glass, glittering and clinking.

Görtz held his hands under the table without answering a single word and looked straight in front of him into the darkness between the two candles. The dean still stood at the door, kneading and rubbing his fingers, and the maid who had helped Görtz's valet to set the table stood behind him in the entry with pinned-up skirts.

Björnschiöld, however, could no longer remain sitting pale and silent, but sprang up and grew red

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to the roots of his hair. He seized all the glasses, and threw their contents back into the flagon. "Accursed be that wine," he cried, "and accursed each and all that taste of such a drink!"

"Amen, amen!" said the dean.

With that they all rose from the table, and the dean took one of the candles and lighted Görtz to the room where he was to lie. Last of all came Pihlgren with the costly sword and the papers wrapped up in the silken handkerchief.

Görtz walked with a lordly air, but threw his wig and vest on an armchair and was then about to lay himself in his spurred boots on the dean's bed, which was covered with the fairest bed-clothes. With that the dean was ill-pleased and he therefore made as if he would pull off the boots, but Bomgarten prevented him, saying, "You are too just a man, my worthy dean, to pull off such dirty boots. But if you will have your maid come here and pull, she is welcome to."

"Fetch in my valet!" ordered Görtz.

"I am an honorable Swede," answered Bomgarten, "and can get along without either valet or groom, if need be. You may thank the dean that he will allow his maid to pull off your boots."

The girl came at once, but could not get off the boots, and Bomgarten again forbade both Pihlgren and the dean to help her. Finally she had to sit down on them and ride them off, but that went

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very slowly, and Görtz grimaced and looked more and more savage, but again did not say a single word.

"If the privy councillor would now like to read his evening prayers and give thanks for a good day's work, there is nothing to prevent," said Bomgarten, pushing to him on the coverlet one of the heathenish Cartesian Latin books that he had come upon among Görtz's belongings. He, however, did not touch the book, but only whispered very softly to himself:

Le rideau descend. Je sors,
je sors d'une grande tragédie,
le héros et sa belle patrie,
les amants malheureux, sont morts.
Allons nous coucher, c'est fini!
Allons nous coucher, c'est la nuit!

"Yes, now the game is ours," said Bomgarten. "Early in the morning the dean's men shall help the servants of the Crown to convey the man to Uddevalla and then on with cavalry to Stockholm. But before all else we must compose a report of the affair and send it directly to-night to the headquarters in Norway. There is no one but Pihlgren to whom I dare entrust the letter."

"The colonel knows," answered Pihlgren, "that if ever a servant faithfully took upon himself every difficulty, and honestly and discreetly, and perhaps boldly as well—"

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"Can no one get that self-righteous man to keep quiet?" whispered Björnschiöld.

But Bomgarten, who was more sagacious, winked at Björnschiöld and said, "Such another fellow as you, Pihlgren, is n't to be found. Get a horse now — and good-by!"

Although Pihlgren was wet through and so tortured and tender that he could hardly hold himself up straight any longer, he now mounted again to the saddle and rode back in the dark night to Norway. Bomgarten afterwards received Görtz's great gold sword as a recompense for his trouble, and Björnschiöld was given a horse with full equipment; but Pihlgren, who, so to speak, had captured Görtz and all his retinue, never got so much as a single farthing.

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A Hero's Funeral

ON the gallows hill in the outskirts of Stockholm, a man stood outside the executioner's cottage in the winter twilight and tapped on the window. When nobody answered, he turned about in the direction of the city and listened with hand to ear. Then he walked forward a stretch toward the verge of the wood, where Görtz's foreign servants stood with their spades, whispering.

"Good evening, comrades!" said he. "It's only Duval, the chief cook. Bring forward the lantern without fear. The executioner is away. All men are now gathered into Stockholm to behold His Majesty's funeral procession."

One of the servants brought out the lighted lantern from under his cloak and threw the light down upon a coffin, which stood without a lid beside the secretly opened grave. There upon the fir twigs, which were still green, lay a corpse in black velvet clothing with the severed head between the feet.

Duval shook his clenched hand toward the city and muttered between his teeth, "Ye vengeful Swedes! These, then, are the earthly remains of the proud Baron Görtz, our gracious master. But remember, remember, he went to the block like a philosopher and a knight, shrugging his shoulders at your bloody sentence. The tool ye broke asunder, but the king who held it in his hand, him ye bear

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at this moment under a velvet canopy to his last resting-place. Do ye suppose that his sleep will be tranquil?"

"Now the funeral knell is beginning," said the servants, threatening with their spades the city, where the glow of rush-lights already tinged the nocturnal heavens. "Hark how vainly the bells are calling down peace!"

Duval replied, "They cannot call down peace upon a grave where men are still disputing. Last night I disguised myself as a groom, went into a tavern, and said to the people, 'Throw stones on the funeral pall to-morrow! Are not your bleeding wounds still open? Did he not bear the sword against his own subjects? Shout his right name over the funeral sledge, oppressor of the people that he is — King Heartless, King Tempter-of-God, King Dolt!'"

"And what answer did the chief cook receive?"

"'Do you hate him, then?' the men answered. What, forsooth, was I, a foreigner, to say to that? Is it not a wonder about this prince that nobody can hate him? Two embittered men cannot meet and find fault with him without beginning to doubt their own words when they separate; and the next time they meet, they speak of him with bared heads. Are we, then, fools ourselves? Thousands of men are standing hushed along the streets to-night, but there is not *one* who hates him. At the first threaten-

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ing word, they would gather about the funeral sledge and defend it, without themselves rightly knowing wherefore. Look you, comrades, we sometimes lay a man in one scale and all our cunning in the other, but yet we note that the beam stands as still as ever. Do you know what that means? That means that there is in this man a drop of the eternal righteousness, because that drop is heavier than gold and lead, and we have no weights to weigh it. Though we pile on all the offences we believe this man committed, the drop still lies bright on his forehead —and the beam does not move. I spoke of the funeral pall. Should I myself have the heart to throw a stone on that pall? What I hated was the severity of fate against my own unhappy master."

The servants now took off their hats, and began to sob, "Our poor unfortunate master! Who, then, will ring the bell for his soul?"

"Good brothers, it's a sorry spectacle when the skipper dies, and all the rats jump out to gnaw in full daylight. We will now hide our master's earthly remains in a portmanteau, and so convey them with us secretly to our country. In case of necessity we must cut off the legs at the knee. Afterwards we will cleanse his face and lay his orders on his breast and bury him in the grave of his fathers. There will then be found some pitying hand that will ring for him the bell for unhappy sinners."

While the servants of Görtz were weeping be-

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side their spades, the fallen king lay in the midst of waxlights at the royal abode of Karlsberg. Like the poorest of soldiers, he lay in a clean white shirt of rough material, but on his head with its gray hair rested a laurel wreath. The smile had even in death become fixed on his lips, so that the teeth were slightly visible.

A cushion with spices was laid over his face, and when the coffin was closed, twelve weather-beaten colonels carried it down the steps and set it on the black-draped sledge under a canopy of royal velvet. To the right of the head walked Gierta, and thirty dark and solemn guardsmen surrounded the sledge with drawn partizans. Close by, among the long black cloaks of the court servants, old Hultman still attended his master, as he had followed him over the snows of the Ukraine and the ash-strewn fields of Poltava. It seemed to him that all that was holy and great in the world had got its death-blow, and when the night-wind roared in the leafless lindens, he recalled the hour when, kneeling outside the barred chamber door, he had heard the king as a boy recite his evening prayer. Everything grew black before him, but at the top of the funeral pall he recognized the crown of the realm, which he had ever seen wave in the air above the head of the king amid the soldiers' coats stained with earth and blood in the trench.

When the funeral procession passed through the

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gate of Karlsberg, all the rush-lights along the Drottninggata and the bridges as far as Riddarholm had already been lighted, but the February night brooded over the city, starless and cloudy. Last among the guardsmen marched a very young man. His rosy face with its severe brow had such a resemblance to the picture of St. George in the Great Church that his comrades called him among themselves Brother George. On the previous day he had dined with Councillor Tessin and had heard many whispers of the malcontents, so that he looked about restlessly at the spectators.

They stand hushed, he thought. It must needs be so. It is an unfortunate whom we bear to the grave, a solitary, abandoned by God and men—a hero!

When the foremost heralds became visible on the Drottninggata, where the townsfolk on foot had formed a hedge, the royal household stepped out from Wrede's house in long cloaks, led by Düben. He walked as stiffly as when, at Bender, he drilled the lackeys with muskets, but when he made out in the distance the banner, against which the wind tore with such violence that it nearly sank, he bowed his head. He walked so stoopingly that his relatives at the windows did not recognize him. After this the knights and nobles stepped out from Cronhjelm's house, and the crown marshal, Per Ribbing, who went with difficulty down the slippery stone

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stairs, turned half round and said, "I am resigned at being childless, for otherwise I should be thinking to-night of the sons fallen in battle who could not steady my faltering arm."

But when he recognized about him the families which were thinned like a wood where every other tree has fallen before the axe, he added very softly as if to himself, "If I had had sons fallen in battle, perhaps my lonely steps would feel less heavy. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!*"

The light shone on folk in windows and on church towers, where the ringers bent forward out of the open shutters. Step by step, the train moved onward to the rumble of discordant drums and kettle-drums, and the funeral sledge rocked in the snow. Around North Bridge foamed the black waters of the river, where once Little Karin's betrothed lover had been cast, sewed up in a sack, and where mud covered the sunken barges and shallops that had formerly anchored under the oaks at Agnefit. At Riddarholm churchyard, where the hundred-men of the land in the old days had paid fifty marks sterling to get their burial-place under the flagging, the newly raised life-guard was drawn up. By every seventh man was a dark vacancy with a taper, as if a light were burning there for the fallen and missing. The people whispered about it, but softly and subduedly. No one wept, and no one threatened. All the Swedes divined that thousands of years would

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gaze back at that night. They felt that now they buried half of their own being.

The wondrous church, around which every age has built its various temples to departed great men, shone as at Christmas Morning Service, and from the tower sounded the metal which before had swung above the highest gallery in the Three Crowns. Brother George, who had long since forgotten to spy about over the mass of people, seized the nearest courtier by the cloak.

"Never did I hear a tolling that affected me so. There is pleading joy in every tone, as if it were for a coronation. And perhaps it is. Does he not return to his capital to-night after eighteen years? Is n't it the expected, the longed-for triumphal march?"

"And the victory?"

"The steadfastness of his will conquered on the night at Fredrikshall when God struck him down dead."

"That steadfastness he turned as a scourge against us."

"Are not your eyes opened yet, so as to see that it was our own secret will and desire which he preserved against our own indecision, like a banner against a rebellious guard?"

It no longer seemed to Brother George that he followed to the grave a solitary and deserted man. He discerned that, when the hero lay fallen and

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the duel was ended, they who had suffered worst beneath his inflexibility lifted him up on their arms.

When Brother George stepped in through the church door, he was blinded by the five hundred wax candles which, borne by gilded figures, burned in a pyramid in the choir. He no longer remembered that it was a funeral ceremony. He thought that the music played a Christmas song, that it was the Christmas Service, that it was the Midwinter Festival for home, for country, for the dead or absent kinsmen. He thought of the fallen, of the prisoners in Siberia, and of all that which had been.

On the black tablet to the right were described in golden characters the nine years when fortune had attended the Swedes, but on the tablet to the left one might read of the nine years when fortune had continually shrunk away. Here the last surviving warriors were now assembled.

The courtiers arranged themselves according to their rank behind the illuminated shrine where Magnus Ladulås and Karl Knutsson lay motionless with their sceptres of stone. Hark to the clangor of knightly squadrons and gay tournaments, hark to the mournful murmur of the rushes at Foglevik!

The gallant Axel Roos and his friend Åberg, who was now so ill and weak with gout and wounds that he supported himself on a crutch, stood on the oldest gravestone of the Vasa race. Behold the hot-

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headed lords, proud, honor-lusting, well-spoken, quick to threaten and to offer their hands again!

Every slab in the floor, every tile in the wall, was illuminated by sagas as lanterns by their flame. How the cope-bells tinkle through the church, when King Albrecht, his fingers in his beard and his red-lashed eyes half shut, surrounded by thick-legged, swaying brothers of the cowl, speaks in German with the Swedish Lord Constable! — But who comes in the doorway before the banner with the leopards? It is Queen Cristina of Denmark; and her servants, emaciated as skeletons, carry chests of garments, tapestries, goblets of silver, and all the precious things that cannot quiet hunger. Trumpet-blasts shake the windows. Pale, her hands before her eyes, she mounts on the highest of the chests and from the choir gazes up at the city, where, like a spring flood of melted ice and snow, Sten Sture's army billows down with its round morions — and all the while the windows rattle.

The banner stood on that side of the choir where the knight Karl Nilsson Färla fell transfixed in the gray long ago with a fragment of the altar-rail in his hand, but the crown was set on the other side, where King Gösta gave Laurentius Petri the pastoral staff, and where the bones of Torkel Knutsson rested. Hark to the song, hark to the murmur in the wilds of Karelia, where the banner of the cross

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flutters over soothsayers and sorcerers and over the blood-smeared gray-stone images of Jumala!

Along the aisle on both sides the partizans of the guards were pointed at the floor under which the pious father confessor of St. Birgitta slept. *Salve regina!* Behold the city of Jerusalem, where thy penitent in pilgrim's weeds hears the harp-notes of the angels of heaven!

The heavy ring of footsteps and spurs struck out echoes under the slab where Göran Persson's uncanny blood was entombed with his sons. How the crows of the gallows hill peck the hand of the priest's son which pushed the two royal brothers away from each other!—and yet do they not sit together in bliss? Gray of hair, gray as to his hanging rags, the fool stands by the prison grating, but back and forward through the castle chapel of Stockholm goes John with ink on his nails and a manuscript in his belt. He is alone, and it is night; but the master musician sits in the gallery, and the organ plays and plays.

The white gleam of the wax candles shone over the darkened, the almost black visages of the warriors, and above in the broken plaster of the roof were red, ominous streaks as of scourge-blows on a human head. They were the old monkish writings,—self-menaces, judgments, scarred upon the foreheads of the Swedes. Six have been, are, and remain

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the causes of Sweden's misfortunes: Self-interest, treacherous hate, contempt of the laws, indifference to the common good, short-sighted inclination toward strangers, obstinate envy of fellow countrymen.—The last words glowed blood-red, only the words about contempt of the laws had faded and were almost wholly obliterated. Might it be that some day all the words would be erased?

The candle-light made its way between the black mourning tapestries to the banners and armorial bearings above, to the blood-red horn of the Oxenstjernas and the blue lion of the Lewenhaupts. There the dead listened to the flutes and kettle-drums. Torstenson remembered when he sat on his litter with his battle chart, and Banér when he rode along the front with his bride, a child who looked down at the pommel of her saddle in fear before the glances of so many men.—And enveloped in that swathing of cloth of gold, which women's hands, wet with inconsolable tears, had arranged for the last time, lay their king with closed eyes, and in the psalms he heard the mild rustle of the summer wind over laurel woods. They all realized that tonight once again a Swedish prince was descending to their dwelling-places.

In the darkness before the church, where the treasurer Råfelt scattered among the silent people the memorial coins which had with difficulty been

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procured, Cronstedt's field-pieces thundered, and the powder smoke penetrated in through the windows.

Thus now was ended the hero saga of the Charles men, and every soul was conscious of a void that nothing could fill. Before the doors the servants already kindled their torches to light home the court to the royal house.

Brother George stood with wide-open and dreaming eyes. He moved his lips and, unheard of others, whispered, "May we celebrate his memory with torches on stormy winter nights! Where have I seen an epitaph as great as that which our beaten folk is now inscribing over him: He did not make us fortunate, and yet we weep for him as for no other."

The guards presented arms.

The organ and flutes and kettledrums were now silent. It became so still that the slightest rattle of a weapon was audible. With harsh and choked voices the warriors raised the last funeral psalm, and slowly, heavily, step by step, the councillors of state bore the coffin to the vault.

The stairway to the tomb of the Charleses descended at the side of the choir. Golden sceptre in hand, with golden crown, golden apple, golden key, golden sword—so accoutred lay the tenth Charles, victorious and mighty. The eleventh lay without

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adornment. Behold the girls with wooden shoes dancing at Mora, hear the quiet words of law and right and harvest and peace!—Whither did they depart hence, those golden days? Where now were the locked barns?

In the same space where the coffin was now set down, Pater Hieronymus, bare-footed and followed by a long row of the gray monks, used aforetime to bow before the altar of St. Francis. Early before the dawn, ever faithful and ever quiet, he invariably came through the icy church. But one morning he remained away. He had gone to Rome and set the papal crown on his head. Hark to the silvern clang of the Lateran's bells, hark to the rustling palm boughs of the congregation!

In such wise had tradition already hallowed this chamber. Where the altar candles had burned before St. Francis, who preached evangelical poverty and renunciation, and who had the earth and the cave for his couch, there now slept the lord and monarch who had made the poverty of the Swedes their adornment. Oh, ye shades of what has long passed away, of what has descended unto the earth, of what sleeps in the starlight! Ye echoes of a saga sung! Do ye hear? Do ye hear who it is that knocks to-night at your dwellings? It is a king— that ye divine. But did ye note the yearning with which he has long been knocking? Saga, he loved it—that

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which sleeps under the great stars. He longed to become the echo of a sung saga.

Two slabs were lifted by their iron rings, and the grave was closed.

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The Ship

LUCIDLY the summer night spread its shadow, but far out among the islands at Korsö gathered armed country-folk and islanders from Sandhamn and Harö.

A winter had snowed itself away since the Sunday when in Tistedal the muskets had been presented the last time before the king. Many of the oldest Charles men and those most broken with gout had already retired with their scanty pensions to their little farms, where they knotted their fishnets by the window or looked over their old diaries. Serious, God-fearing, respected, they met at the church on Sundays; and generals and colonels, without regard to rank, embraced with moist eyes their brothers in arms of the long campaigns. The terms of peace had not yet been signed. When the cannon of the Russian fleet thundered once more among the islands, the veterans buttoned up their worn blue coats as tightly as before and unbuckled the broadsword from the bed-post. Then they each and all went out to defend hearth and home to the uttermost.

Captain Resslöf had appointed himself leader of the band that was assembled on Korsö. Already weary of his room, he stood among the people with a confident bearing. His razor and scissors had rested all winter in the drawer. His hair was so

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long, his beard was so white, and it was such a pleasure to look at him, that even the sullen and heavy islanders brightened whenever he turned toward them.

After the day's tempest, the surf was still rolling against the rocky seaward shore of the island, but in the hollow by the shining sound hardly a puff of air brushed over the pines under which the men, restless and expectant, counted the distant cannon-shots.

With shaking voice a pastor's son from Djurö stepped forward. He held his cap squeezed in his hand, and his pallor was grayer than ever in the nocturnal light:

"Captain, you have sent the sloops that brought us here to the inner islands to fetch more people. Two leaky rowboats are all we have to save ourselves in, if the enemy lands, but we are more than forty men. Conceal the truth no more! Our little band can no longer accomplish anything here. We have heard, of course, that Rika Fuchs with his Södermanlanders has already marched to Södra Stäk to beat the enemy or lose his life, and that Düker with his Dalecarlians and Westmanlanders is following soon after; but we know, too, that at Boo and along all the coast of Värmdon and Södertörn there will soon be nothing to look for on the cliffs but black ashes. Forgive my words, but we have all heard that Trosa is sacked, and that Nyköping is burning, so that

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the glare is visible away up toward Stockholm. In Norrköping Swedish peasants and soldiers plunder the wagons of the fugitives in the open street. At Vikboland the peasantry give signals to the Russian ships with sheets and bleached cloth to show that they surrender and swear loyalty to the czar, and at Marstrand Tordenskjold has hoisted the Danish flag. Whichever way we look, the air is full of conflagration and smoke. It 's all over with Sweden, our home, our home."

"I conceal nothing," answered Resslöf, "but rely upon it that the Swedes always get help at the eleventh hour. They seldom get it sooner."

The pastor's son smiled with a sneer, as he departed: "It is night now, and the tenth hour has just gone by. Let us be hopeful!"

The men pressed close about Resslöf in great uneasiness. The cannon-shots were still thundering, but more faintly and farther out to sea.

Then the pale son of the pastor came once more across the rocks. He stumbled and slipped. He leaped. He pressed in among the crowd without letting himself be checked.

" Here 's an uncanny thing, good people. Out at sea there a ship is coming with a lighted lantern in the bow, but with neither mast, nor sail, nor oars. And not a man can I make out on deck. Nobody is standing at the tiller. But the ship goes on just the same, though it moves slowly, slowly."

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A murmur of superstitious fear ran through the peasants, but the taciturn islanders followed Resslöf to the topmost cliff by the inlet. They thought that the pastor's son had seen the ship in a vision, for they could not discover anything on the wide sea, around which glowed the nocturnal heavens.

Suddenly they all uttered a cry of astonishment, and the others, who followed them at a distance, began once more to murmur. From behind the rugged cape there drove forward heavily and slowly in the surf a brigantine, without sail and rigging, but with port-holes painted white, and at the stern under the lighted lantern stood a golden lion with paws raised as if to spring.

"That 's a ghost ship," muttered the peasants.

Hesitatingly Resslöf ordered some of the bravest islanders to take their muskets and accompany him in one of the rowboats.

They neared the ship cautiously with noiseless strokes and raised muskets, but when they hailed, they received no answer. Some of the small panes in the after cabin gleamed, but that was the reflection of the night, and soon they all became equally dark. Only the bow light burned and flickered.

"God have mercy on us!" whispered Resslöf, pointing to the long strip of cloth which trailed in the water from the stern. "There are our colors. And now I can read the name. This is the brigantine *Swedish Lion!*"

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"Yes, yes, it's the brigantine *Swedish Lion*," murmured the peasants on the island.

They shipped the oars. They lay to by the helm and climbed up on a rope of the fallen rigging, but when they entered the empty cabin through a broken window, they had to feel their way forward in the darkness with their hands.

"Is n't there a crew of a single man here?" inquired Resslöf, raising his voice. No one answered, however, but all remained as quiet as before.

He then shoved up the hatch to the deck. Ship rats ran freely back and forth over the planks, but along the gunwales on both sides lay pale and motionless sailors, who had fallen at their post. He went from man to man, bending down to convince himself that they were all dead.

Thereupon he said to his followers, "The eleventh hour is come. Bring the people on board now and make the two rowboats fast at the stern, before the surf and current drive the brigantine ashore. We can both bring ourselves safe to the inner islands and salvage a vessel of the Crown that has gone bravely through its fight."

The old man went off across the deck and sat down at the highest point of the stern, alone and apart from the others.

As soon as the people had been conveyed on board, they towed the brigantine in between the islands. Under the softly gliding prow the bays

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and sounds, illumined by the summer night, reflected the golden lion.

The reports of the cannon no longer rolled in from the sea. More slowly than a broken veteran proceeding to his cottage on a crutch, the ship glided between the rocky islets. Women and children, who had hidden there under bushes and roots of trees, stepped out of their concealment. Joyful at hearing the words of their mother tongue from the deck, they flocked upon the beaches and piers with countless importunate questions.

"This is the *Swedish Lion* coming back from the fight," answered those on board.

With that the old Charles man by the flagstaff roused himself from his melancholy and stood up.

"It is more than that. Give me your hands!" he said to the younger men, drawing them close to him. "Hats off, good people, hats off! This devastated ship is like Sweden, who conceals herself behind her islands with her last troops and her dead. How the prisoners longed for her, those who have gone hundreds of miles away beside the rivers of Siberia! Lonely, in disguise, they stood on the deck of their whale-boat with the illimitable expanse of the Arctic Ocean before their sight, calling upon God every hour in their anguish that He should not quench the flame of their life till they were under the roof of their home. The roof of their

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home? It lies charred upon the ground. Beaten, beaten is our people, divided is our empire, and on our coasts the ruins are smoking. O inscrutable, eternal God, will the dawn never come?— Be silent, be silent, good people: the dawn is coming. The captives in Siberian cities, as they sit dumbly at their handiwork, shall one morning leap up and see in the square a rider waving a white flag as a sign that peace has been declared. Thirsty mouths shall drink from Frederick's and Ulrica's gold-rimmed goblets, and the Christmas board shall again be spread by women who are not in mourning. Yet again the hay shall diffuse its fragrance in Sweden. The church bells shall ring. For a whole year they shall ring every noontide for peace—and for the fallen. Where, indeed, are the old battalions with Grothusen's drum and the banners of Turkish silk? And he who held us together in the great strife and never would believe the sign that God had forsaken us, he in whose heroic nature all our yearning was concealed,— where does he dwell? Ask the children that sing. Alas! they go hence one by one, the old brothers in arms. Wherever we fare through the country, walking or by post-chaise, we shall recognize in the mists of night the small white churches where eight or ten strong sons have laid the slabs above their graves. And where does there blossom in an alien land a field so remote that we may not sit down

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on the sward and whisper: 'Is this perchance the place where one of ours, one who fought and bled, is slumbering?' In their poor garments they loitered a short while before us by the bivouac fire, and then went away and fell. Such they were. So I recall them. So, too, they live in memory and say amid a grateful land: 'Beloved be the people that in the decline of their greatness made their poverty to be revered before the world!'"

THE END

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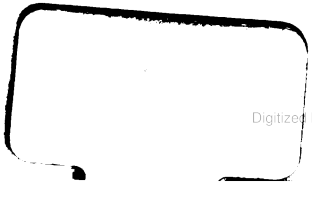

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